

SHUVINAI ASHOONA

Life & Work

By Nancy G. Campbell

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BIOGRAPHY

Celebrated for her large-scale drawings, enigmatic subject matter, and collaborative work with contemporary artists, Shuvinai Ashoona (b. 1961) is a third-generation Inuit artist living in Kinngait, Nunavut. The dramatic changes in the North—the shift from life on the land to settled communities and access to popular culture—are reflected in her art, which overturns stereotypical notions of Inuit art. Her constantly evolving work is included in national and international biennales and exhibitions.



EARLY YEARS

Shuvinai Ashoona was born in 1961 at the nursing station in Cape Dorset (more recently referred to by its original name, Kinngait). Her father, Kiugak Ashoona (1933–2014), a hunter and master carver who gained international recognition in his own lifetime, was a second-generation Inuit artist, the youngest son of the great first-generation Inuit artist Pitseolak Ashoona (c. 1904–1983). Shuvinai's mother, Sorosilutu Ashoona (b. 1941), was Kiugak's second wife and an artist in her own right. Although Shuvinai was their first child, she was not adopted by her grandparents, as is Inuit custom, but stayed with her parents.¹ She is the eldest of fourteen children, including three who died at birth. Her sisters Inuquq, Odluriaq, Mary, and Goota Ashoona (b. 1967) followed Shuvinai. The family adopted six other children: Shuvinai's brothers, Salomonie, Inutsiak, Cee (b. 1967), and Napachie Ashoona (b. 1974), and her sisters Haiga and Leevee. As the eldest, Shuvinai helped to care for her younger siblings.

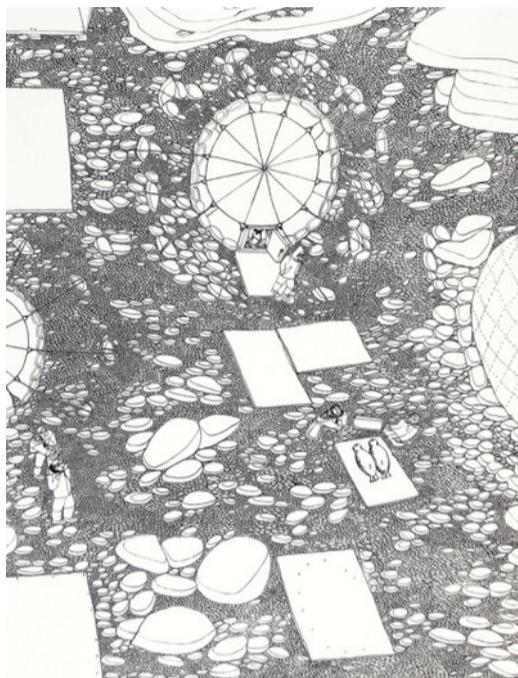


Shuvinai Ashoona, *Untitled*, 2013, graphite, coloured pencil, and ink on paper, 45 x 126 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.

The family lived in the community of Cape Dorset, where by her account Shuvinai attended primary school for about five years.² Shuvinai does not recall the desire to make art at a young age, but she enjoyed classroom activities and stories. She fondly remembers time spent out on the land in the summer months, particularly clamping with her family, boating, and camping. Later in life, she would depict many scenes of life on the land and in the town of Cape Dorset, as in *Untitled*, 2013, and *Outside School*, 2015.

Cape Dorset had been settled only relatively recently by the time Shuvinai was ready for elementary school,³ and she was part of the first generation of children to attend school in the town. With the encouragement of two of her teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Hohne, and the support of her parents, Shuvinai was one of very few students her age in Cape Dorset who planned to attend high school in Iqaluit, the largest city in Nunavut and a two-hour flight from Cape Dorset. The move was significant for Shuvinai, who had never lived apart from her family. She recalls being given a room in the dormitory but has no memory of actually staying there. She was frightened to be so far away from home, and she returned to Cape Dorset soon after she moved away. In 1977 Shuvinai became pregnant with her friend Joe Ottokie's child and, when she was

sixteen, gave birth to their daughter, Mary. Though Mary was given to Shuvinai's parents for adoption, Shuvinai also stayed with her family and took care of her daughter.

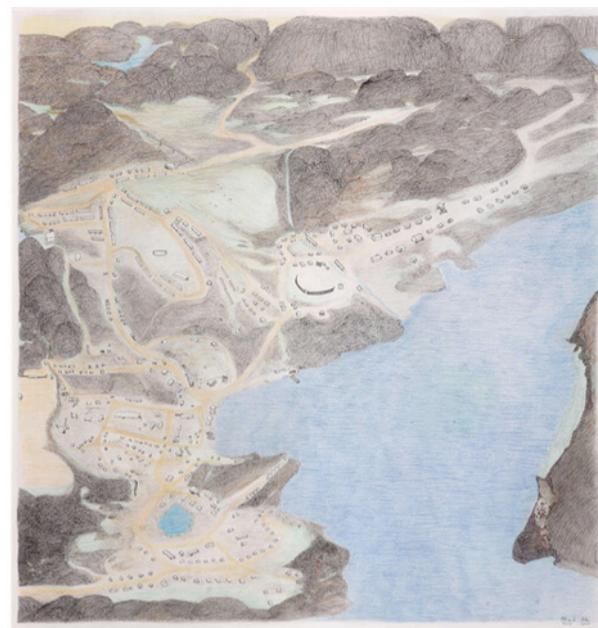


LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Tent Surrounded by Rocks*, 2006, ink on paper, 50.8 x 66 cm, collection of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Summer Sealift*, 2004, lithograph on paper, 56.5 x 76.3 cm, Oakville Galleries and various collections.

The Ashoona clan, including Shuvinai and young Mary, was unusual because they left Cape Dorset around 1979 and, for almost a decade, lived independently in outpost camps at Luna Bay and Kangiqsujuaq, returning to Cape Dorset only for holidays or the arrival of the sealift, a crane-bearing cargo ship that makes an annual delivery of supplies to remote Arctic communities.⁴ In the late 1970s and early 1980s very few families still lived a nomadic life on the land, largely relying on hunting and fishing for survival. The period in her late teens spent living the traditional Inuit way of life had a significant impact on Shuvinai's art: it gave her an innate familiarity with the land and respect for it. In the drawing *Tent Surrounded by Rocks*, 2006, Shuvinai depicts from memory what life would have looked like when her large family-community camped and hunted on the land. No matter how fantastical her subject matter would become in later years, her work would always be deeply rooted in the experience of the northern landscape.

RETURN TO TOWN

Toward the end of the 1980s, when she was in her late twenties, Shuvinai and her family moved back to Cape Dorset and settled in the town. Initially she shared a house with two of her sisters. Her daughter, Mary, lived with another sister, Odluriaq. The transition from living on the land to community life was difficult for the family, particularly for Shuvinai.

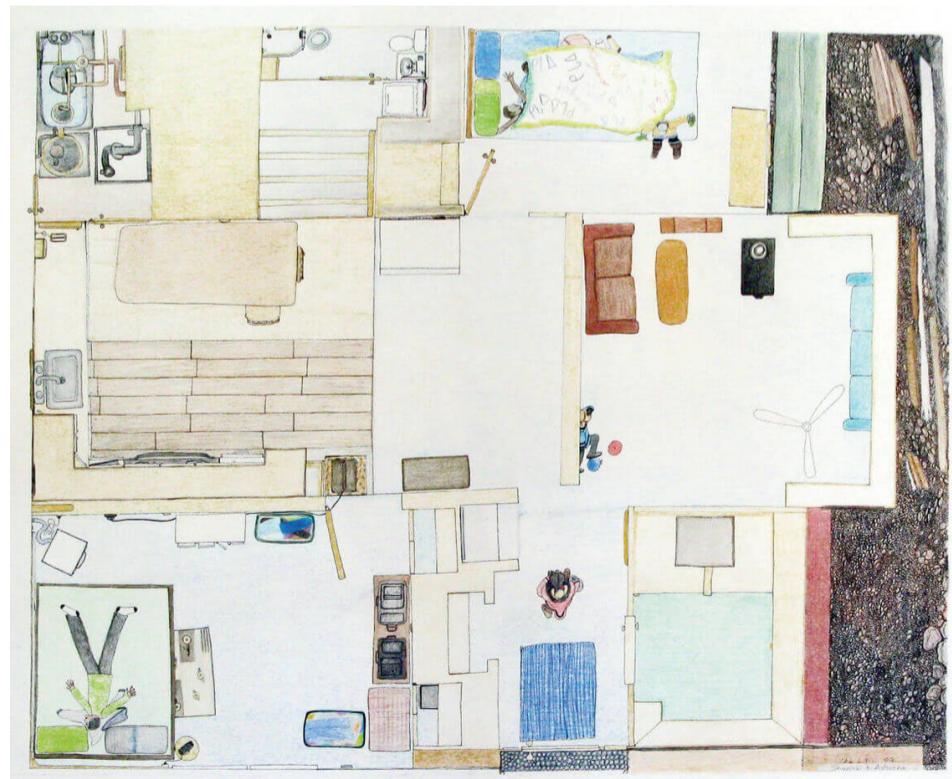


LEFT: The community of Cape Dorset on the coast of Dorset Island, 2006, photograph by Nancy Campbell. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Cape Dorset from Above*, 2012, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 127 x 121.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Mary recollects that her mother suffered greatly at that time.⁵ She recalled an episode at her home during which she was called to her mother's side only to find Shuvinai with her neck and back muscles so tight with tension that her head was thrown back and her mouth stretched open. Mary's descriptions of her mother's symptoms sound like a seizure, but Shuvinai was convinced she was possessed by demons. Mary believes that her mother's condition is likely genetic, as one of Shuvinai's aunt's suffered in much the same way, as does a sister and a nephew of Shuvinai.

Although Shuvinai is not a patient of Dr. Allison Crawford, the psychiatrist who visits Kinngait regularly, Dr. Crawford knows her well. She observes of Shuvinai's thought process: "I would probably describe [it] as tangential with a loosening of associations. Overall, her personality could be described as odd or eccentric ... but already that is becoming stigmatizing."⁶ Dr. Crawford comments on Shuvinai's creative impulse: "One can easily see how ... quirks in her thinking are also positive contributions to her artmaking and to underlying processes such as divergent thinking necessary for creativity."⁷

While Shuvinai is known to depict everyday scenes, as in *Shuvinai's World-At Home*, 2012, she also



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Shuvinai's World-At Home*, 2012, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 100.3 x 121.9 cm, collection of BMO Financial Group. In an interview with Pat Feheley, Kinngait Studios manager William Ritchie notes of this work: "She has shown in great detail the home in which she lives with her father, Kiugak Ashoona, and other family members. It is her world at home."



found a way to channel visions and an altered sense of reality into her work. *Rock Landscape*, 1998, with its detailed rendering of a strangely distorted landscape, provides an early example. Drawings such as *Composition (Two Men and a Spider)*, 2007-8, and *Titanic, Nascoorie, and Noah's Ark*, 2008, are but two of many drawings by the artist from the 2000s onward that show her melding everyday and fantastical elements in her work: the former includes human figures with hybrid features and the latter shows a winged polar bear and distortions of size, the giant squid many times bigger than the fishing boats it pursues.

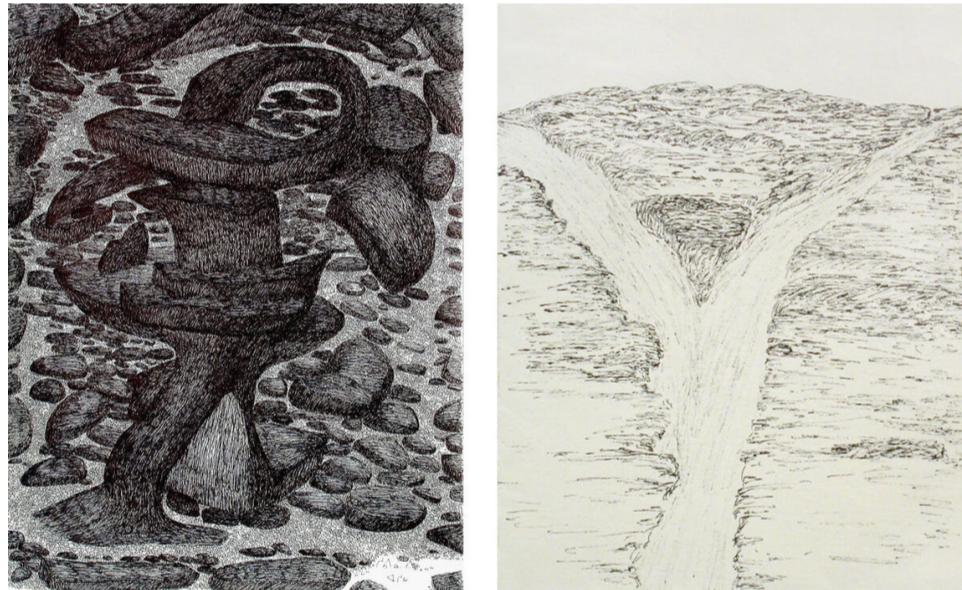
DRAWING FROM ROOTS

Shortly after her family's return to Cape Dorset in the late 1980s, Shuvinai visited the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative⁸ for the first time, brought to its renowned drawing, printing, and carving studios by her younger sister Goota Ashoona, who had already begun artmaking. Goota thought that drawing would provide Shuvinai with income and help her to become self-reliant. Their famous aunt Napachie Pootoogook (1938-2002) encouraged Shuvinai to draw as well.

At the co-op Shuvinai had access to art materials, which she took home to experiment with. Although initially she made drawings at home, Shuvinai quickly became a regular at the co-op, a safe haven where she could work and stay warm. Like the two generations of Inuit artists before her, she received no formal training but certainly had ample opportunity to learn from her elders by watching them at work.

The co-op is a meeting place for Cape Dorset artists, many who no doubt had an impact on Shuvinai's artmaking. The second-generation Inuit artists Napachie Pootoogook and Mayoreak Ashoona (b. 1946)—Shuvinai's aunts—along with first-generation artist Kenojuak Ashevak (1927-2013), were particularly influential. Her cousin Ohito Ashoona (b. 1952) is a carver, and her younger brother Napachie also carves. Shuvinai has worked closely with her cousins Annie Pootoogook (1969-2016) and Siassie Kenneally (b. 1969), and over time they would begin experimenting with new ideas in their drawings.⁹

Shuvinai's first purchased works, the earliest of which date to 1993, are delicate, small-scale drawings, as in *Waterfall*, 1993-94. This early group of drawings, most of which are held in the Cape Dorset Archives at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario, also includes subject matter that offers intimations of later developments in her work, such as a flayed Christ and distorted landscapes.



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Untitled (Strange Rock Formation)*, 2003-4, ink on paper, 66 x 50.8 cm, private collection. Distorted landscapes such as this presage later, more fantastical work. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Waterfall*, 1993-94, ink on paper, 16.5 x 12.7 cm, Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver. Shuvinai's early drawings were subtle, sparse landscapes.



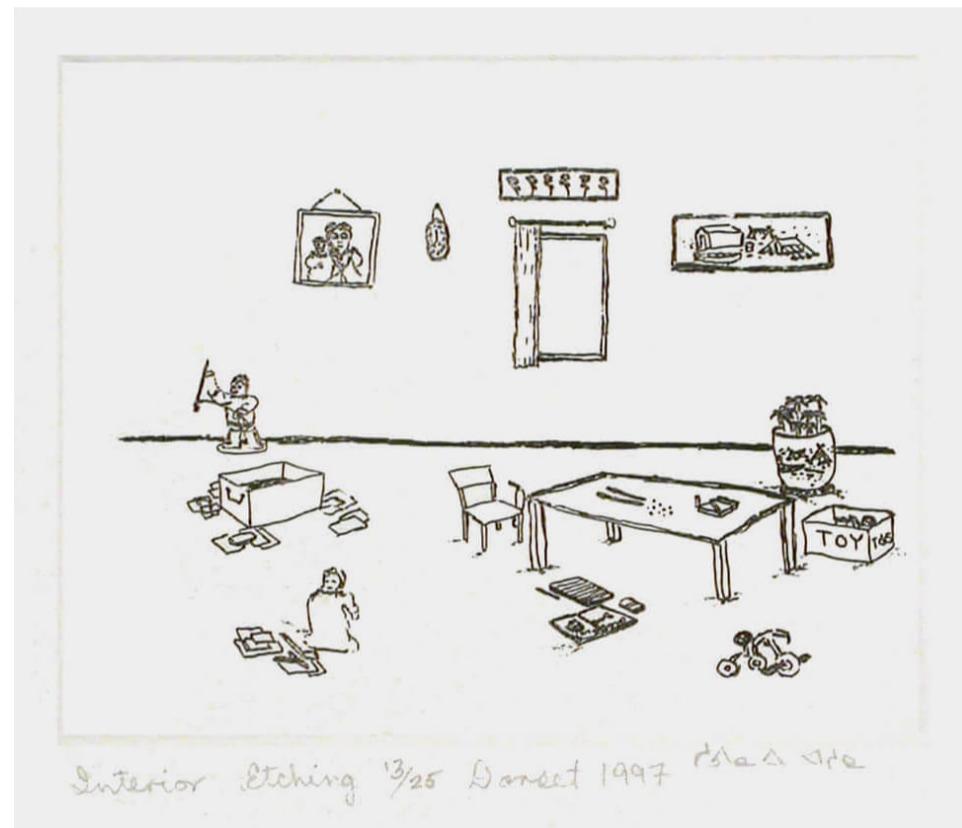
ESTABLISHING HER VOICE

In 1997 two of Shuvinai's drawings were adapted into prints (titled *Interior* and *Settlement*) for her initial inclusion in the Cape Dorset Annual Print Collection. Since then prints based on her drawings have appeared sporadically in the yearly releases. In 1999 the McMichael Canadian Art Collection held the first exhibition of Shuvinai's work, in the notable show *Three Women, Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, Napatchie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona*.

In the early 2000s, when Shuvinai was in her early forties, her artwork exposed a new dynamism, as she gradually introduced colour into her work and began to explore her imagination and invent a personal iconography. Artist and photographer William Ritchie (b. 1954), manager of Kinngait Studios, encouraged Shuvinai to expand her subject matter, to mine her imaginings and historic stories from Inuit culture, popular culture, and Christian iconography. She began to set hybrid creatures and evocative human figures against highly detailed northern landscapes, which have come to be expertly realized by the artist, as is well demonstrated in *Hunting Monster*, 2015. Comparing this

more recent work with an earlier drawing of a hybrid figure, such as *Discombobulated Woman*, 1995–96, reveals the artist applying colour, a heightened level of detail, and a different approach to negative space. The marked evolution in her artistic style points to an arduously developed artistic sensibility.

Shuvinai came to the broader attention of galleries and institutions in the South in the early 2000s, as signalled by the purchase of six of her landscapes in 2001 by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.¹⁰ As she became a prolific and original contributor to the Dorset stable of graphic artists, which includes Tim Pitsiulak (1967–2016) and Ningekuluk Teevee (b. 1963), her drawings began commanding higher and higher prices. She likewise became the key earner for her extended family, which to this day relies on her tremendous talent and generosity.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Interior*, 1997, etching on paper, 22.9 x 26.7 cm, various collections.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Hunting Monster*, 2015, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 123 x 162.5 cm, Oakville Galleries.

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST

It was not until the mid-2000s that Shuvinai's career began to take off, following the attention gained by her cousin Annie Pootoogook. Citing Jan Allen, curator Sandra Dyck notes, "The success of Annie Pootoogook—who had a solo exhibition at The Power Plant in Toronto and won the Sobey Art Award in 2006—convincingly demonstrated 'the potential of daringly original contemporary Inuit art to capture the attention of global audiences.' Pootoogook's success broke ground for her artistic peers at home, too; the art world's capricious gaze was now focused intently on Cape Dorset."¹¹

Shuvinai's and Pootoogook's work was exhibited alongside the work of their cousin Siassie Kenneally at the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, in the 2006-7 show *Ashoona: Third Wave, New Drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona, Siassie Kenneally and Annie Pootoogook*. Feheley Fine Arts in Toronto held a solo exhibition of Shuvinai's work in 2006, as did the Marion Scott Gallery in Vancouver in 2007, and Shuvinai travelled south for these shows. Her work has since been presented in several group exhibitions across Canada.¹²



Shuvinai Ashoona, *People Walking Between Worlds*, 2010, pencil crayon and ink on paper, 64.8 x 49.5 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston.



In 2008 Shuvinai worked with Regina-based artist John Noestheden (b. 1945) to create *Earth and Sky*, 2008, a gigantic banner that became part of a public art installation at the Basel Art Fair and was subsequently exhibited at the 18th Sydney Biennale in 2012 and at the National Gallery of Canada in 2013 at a major international exhibition of Indigenous artists, *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*.

In 2009 the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto paired two contemporary Canadian women artists—Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle (b. 1972)—in a two-person show, *Noise Ghost: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*. The show created a new conversation, challenging old assumptions about Inuit art; for example, that it should be a singular production depicting animals, birds, or fish or figures of hunters and mothers. *Noise Ghost* won the Ontario Association of Art Galleries Exhibition of the Year Award. Two years later Boyle travelled to the North for a three-week residency at Kinngait Studios, working alongside Shuvinai.



LEFT: Installation view of *Universal Cobra* at Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal, in partnership with Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto, 2015, photograph by Paul Litherland. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle, *Exhibition*, 2015, ink on paper and coloured pencil on paper, 99 x 107 cm, Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto, and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.

Their second joint exhibition, *Universal Cobra: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*, was organized by Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain in Montreal in collaboration with Feheley Fine Arts in 2015. The two artists showed both individual works and a number of sensational collaborative drawings created at Kinngait Studios.¹³ Shuvinai's repertoire included monsters and hybrid wildlife, hunters, massive icebergs, and women giving birth to planets. These collaborative works, as in *Exhibition*, 2015, and *InaGodadavida*, 2015, show an expanded use of imagery of the land around her, the artist's insightful, playful mind turning logic on its head. With these drawings, Shuvinai has overturned notions that conscript Inuit art to particular kinds of representation, often promoted as "traditional."



Shuvinai has enjoyed great success with her drawings, which along with her prints continue to be sought after by museums across Canada. In recent years her work has been selected for international exhibitions of contemporary art, including *Oh, Canada: Contemporary Art from North North America* in 2013 at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), North Adams, Massachusetts, and *Unsettled Landscapes: SITElines: New Perspectives on Art of the Americas* in 2014-15 at SITE Santa Fe.

Shuvinai has been working daily at Kinngait Studios for more than twenty-five years. She is a major force in the development and success of the contemporary drawing practice now prevalent at the studio, and she has become a critical voice in Canadian contemporary art. In a wonderful article on Shuvinai in *Vitamin D2: New Perspectives in Drawing*, author Meeka Walsh concludes with words from Shuvinai: "'I'm such a little person beside such a big universe.' More than that, she is a little person creating a big universe."¹⁴



Shuvinai Ashoona drawing in Kinngait Studios, January 29, 2013, photograph by William Ritchie.

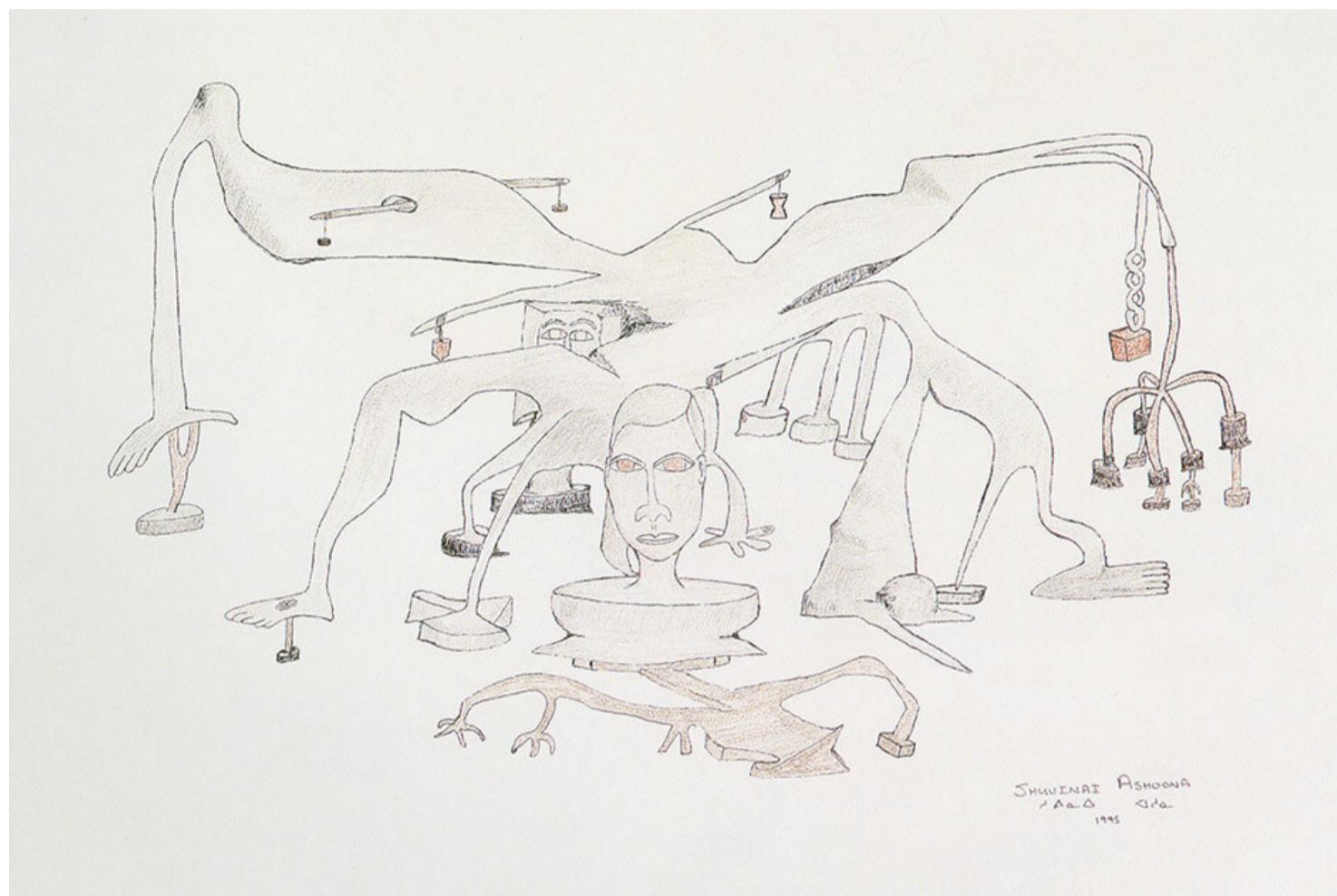


KEY WORKS

Shuvinai Ashoona has gained international recognition for her drawings, which successfully straddle the worlds of contemporary art and Inuit art. Her work is influenced by the place she lives, the people she works with, the world she takes in through the media, and her imagination. This selection of key works, beginning with early monochromatic drawings and closing with Shuvinai's most recent collaborative work, highlights the development of her practice from her first works in the early 1990s to her 2015 collaboration with a contemporary artist, Shary Boyle.



DISCOMBOBULATED WOMAN 1995–96



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Discombobulated Woman*, 1995–96
Fineliner pen and coloured pencil on paper, 33 x 50.7 cm
Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto

Discombobulated Woman is a fascinating example of an early work and a forerunner of the many disjointed or disconcerting figures in landscapes in Shuvinai Ashoona's oeuvre that would follow. This early work shows an Inuit artist taking an approach unique to those that had come before her—her style had not been seen in drawings coming out of Cape Dorset before this time.

In this intricate, sparsely rendered drawing, a woman's disembodied head, punctuated by two red eyes, emanates from a rock base. Multiple gigantic limbs extending from the back of the woman's head can also be seen as part of the rocky landscape or as a series of winding bridges. Hands and feet dangle from some of the outstretched limbs, while others appear to be more like tree trunks. Weights hang from fulcrums that pierce the limbs. At once whimsical and grotesque, this enigmatic drawing is a clear precursor to her later highly imaginative work.



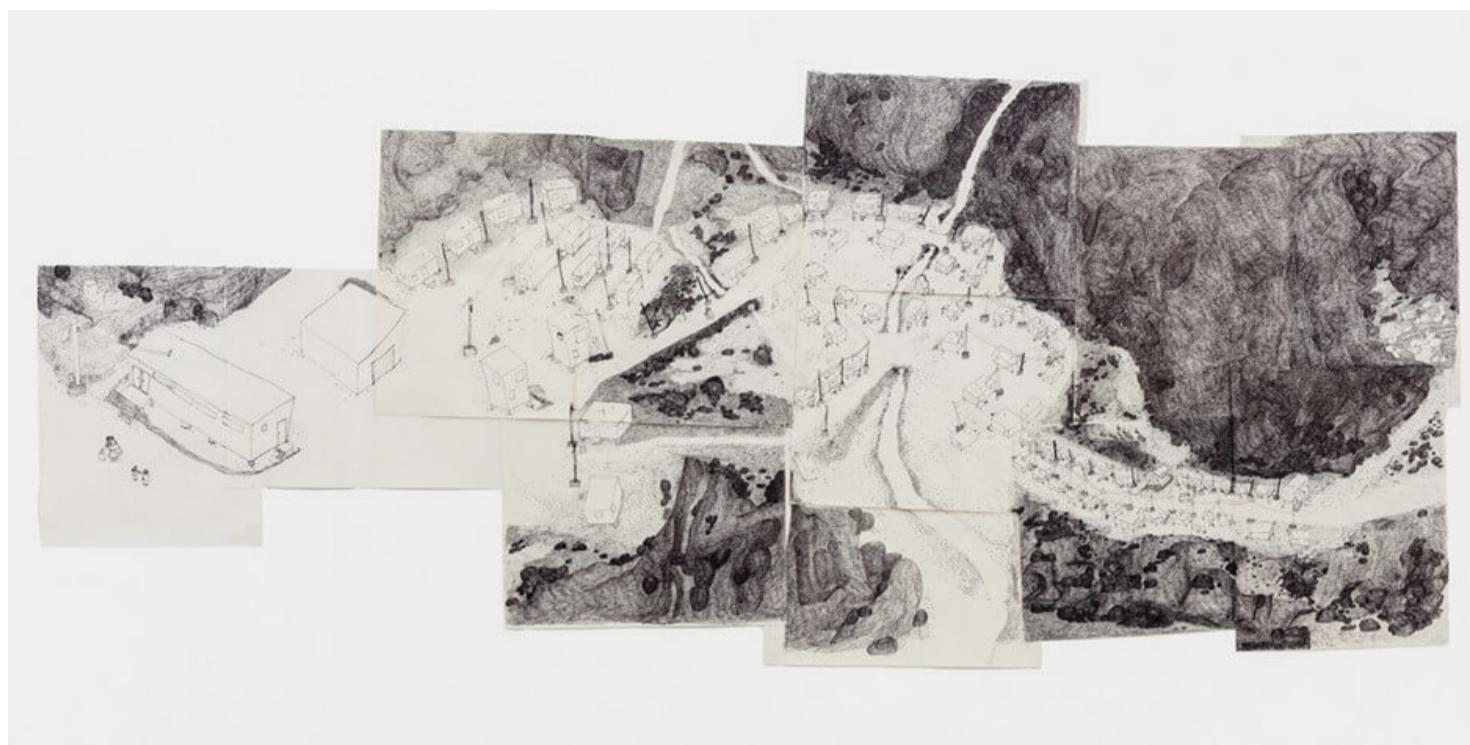
In examining the early work of artists, it is not uncommon to see multiple styles and experimentation. While produced with the same scratchy ink and delicate hand typical of Shuvinai's first attempts at drawing, *Discombobulated Woman* represents a departure from her earliest works, dated to 1993, which used her community, the environment with which she is most familiar. *Community*, 1993-94, an early, monochromatic depiction of Cape Dorset, shows the artist's use of a bird's-eye-view perspective, with the bay in the centre of the composition, three fishing boats anchored, and summer tents and prefab buildings sparingly placed on the land around the bay. Although it is by no means a comprehensive rendering of the town, the work includes details such as a flagpole and laundry drying on a line.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Community*, 1993-94, Fineliner pen on paper, 50.5 x 66 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg.

While its palette is subdued, *Discombobulated Woman* reveals the artist introducing accents of colour, a personal iconography, and a more intentional and experimental drawing style, one that echoes through later drawings. It is best not to read *Discombobulated Woman*'s title too literally, as the work was likely not titled by the artist. Most Cape Dorset works are titled in the South¹ (for example, by Dorset Fine Arts), although this is beginning to change at Kinngait Studios, as artists now occasionally name their own pieces.

COMPOSITION (OVERLOOKING CAPE DORSET) 2003



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Overlooking Cape Dorset)*, 2003

Ink on 12 sheets of paper, 138.5 x 328 cm

Collection of Ed Pien and Johannes Zits

An assemblage of twelve sheets of paper, *Composition (Overlooking Cape Dorset)* is an anomaly among the hundreds of thousands of drawings produced in Kinngait. Shuvinai Ashoona began this black and white, bird's-eye depiction of her community in 2003. She connected large sheets of paper (each 50 by 66 centimetres) to expand the composition and include more details than she would otherwise have been able to on a smaller surface. She did this intuitively, pinning pieces while she drew in order to form her vision of Cape Dorset.

When assembled on the wall, *Composition (Overlooking Cape Dorset)* is more than three metres wide. Although a few large-format watercolours were produced at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op before 2003 (for example, the watercolour *Rendered Oil*, 2002, by Arnaqu Ashevak [1956-2009]), this work predates the 2006 introduction of large-scale coloured pencil and ink drawings produced and facilitated by Kinngait Studios, such as *Cape Dorset Freezer*, 2005, by Annie Pootoogook (1969-2016). The larger format vitalized the studio as collectors of contemporary art and museums sought them out.



Annie Pootoogook, *Cape Dorset Freezer*, 2005, coloured pencil, black metallic ballpoint pen, and graphite on wove paper, 111.5 x 233.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Composition (Overlooking Cape Dorset) depicts the view from the crest of the hill overlooking the part of town where the artist grew up. Many aspects of this vista are true to life—the houses, power lines, and roads—but this is not strictly an exercise in mapping: she adds details that are imaginary or perhaps memories of how the town used to look. Unlike most Inuit drawings, *Composition (Overlooking Cape Dorset)* has been exhibited, almost exclusively, in mainstream contemporary art venues. Its size allows it to sit comfortably in a contemporary art exhibition space, and the bird's-eye view and innovative construction make it a unique piece. It was first exhibited in 2008 at the Western Front Gallery in Vancouver as part of *Never let the facts get in the way of the truth*, a group show featuring the work of Shuvinai Ashoona, Nadia Myre (b. 1974), Allan Packer (b. 1956), and Tania Willard (b. 1977). This exhibition was curated by Candice Hopkins and dealt with issues of mapping and memory.

This landmark work was also included in the 5th Moscow Biennale, 2013, curated by Catherine de Zegher, followed two years later by SITE Santa Fe's *Unsettled Landscapes: SITElines: New Perspectives on Art of the Americas*, 2014–15. Shuvinai is one of the few artists from Kinngait who has successfully straddled the worlds of contemporary art and Inuit art and gained international recognition for her drawings.

COMPOSITION (COMMUNITY WITH SIX HOUSES) 2004-5

Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Community with Six Houses)*, 2004-5

Coloured pencil and ink on paper, 66 x 50.8 cm

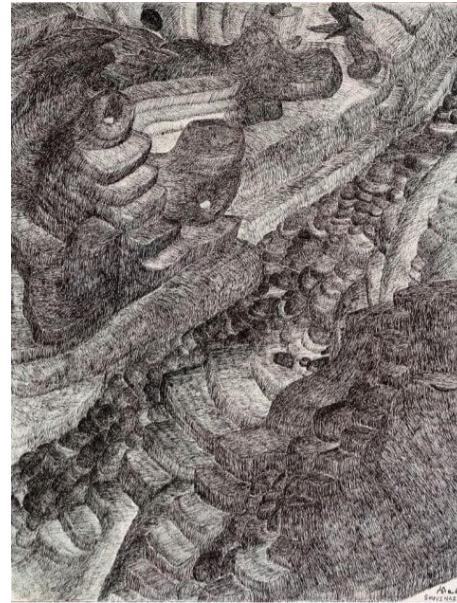
Art Gallery of Guelph



As Shuvinai Ashoona began to draw more regularly, she quickly adapted her techniques—and then adopted new modes of mark making. The late 1990s to mid-2000s was a period of much experimentation for the artist, in which she conceretedly moved away from the small, sparsely rendered landscapes of her early work. She began to use larger paper formats and increased the concentration of line and dense cross-hatching, eventually introducing colour as well. She shifted her typical bird's-eye, long-view vantage point for landscapes of Cape Dorset and started to explore landscapes of imaginative depth and multiple layers that included tunnels, nooks, and crannies at closer range. These rockscapes, as in two drawings from 1998 both titled *Rock Landscape*, seem to be composed in her imagination and, until the early 2000s, did not present buildings or other signature markers to denote a specific place.

Her exercises in building compressed, imaginary landscapes are wonderfully realized in *Composition (Community with Six Houses)*. The landscape is rendered in black ink and rises five levels from rocky ground that is delicately and intricately drawn in fine detail, with ink and coloured pencil. Shuvinai outlines every pebble, stone, and rock individually, giving richness to the tundra. A hydro pole, a ladder, and stairs connect the levels of the landscape. In a trick to the eye, the lower levels seem to have more light while the upper levels appear more densely shaded. A side-view glimpse shows six matchbox houses, typical in Cape Dorset, coloured in pinks and blues.¹ Shuvinai likes the fact that the houses are hidden in this vertical place. She has said, "It would be nice to live hidden in the rocks where you could go up and down."²

This drawing is one of the artist's first attempts at using colour, marking another significant shift in her work. Here, and from this point forward, Shuvinai tends to combine her imaginative worlds with things she has seen or remembers, in this case, for example, the hydro pole and houses. The dense cross-hatching seen in earlier works loosens, allowing for more light and eventually lively colour to resonate through her compositions, giving the paper a chance to breathe. *Composition (Community with Six Houses)* shows the artist developing into her mature style.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Rock Landscape*, 1998, Fineliner pen on ivory wove paper, 66 x 50.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. The detailed shading of black ink in a cross-hatch style lends a dramatic effect. Notably, landscapes that Shuvinai rendered in this style do not present any recognizable landmarks such as camping sites or buildings from her Cape Dorset home.



FAMILY IN TENT 2003



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Family in Tent*, 2003

Fineliner pen on paper, 51 x 66.5 cm

Winnipeg Art Gallery

Depicting what is dear to her, Shuvinai Ashoona has rendered many drawings of summer camp tents. *Family in Tent* is an exceptional, early-career example, with a fascinating interior scene of life in camp. Her tent drawings could be as simple as aerial perspectives showing the circular outlines of tents on the tundra or images of sealskin domes in a rocky landscape. *Family in Tent* presents an inside view, with the mother cooking, the father sipping tea, and the children sleeping. Shuvinai spent almost a decade living in an outpost camp with her family in the 1980s, so camp life is well familiar to her.¹

In Cape Dorset it is still common for families to spend the short summer months in a tent, enjoying the mild weather and fresh breeze off the bay, often pitching camp not far from the family home. *Family in Tent* shows an array of supplies necessary for life on the land. Prominent are a box of Red Rose tea, sugar, a *quiliq* (oil lamp) used for cooking and light, as well as dishes and boxes. The family is in the midst of finishing a meal of "country food"—food they have hunted or foraged—including a skinned seal and bags of clams. On



the mother's back there is a baby in the hood of her *amauti* (woman's parka), and two children lie in bed. The floor of the tent is very rocky, diligently drawn by the artist in great detail. With the exception of the Red Rose box, the scene could be set at any time, reflecting a traditional life camping on the tundra.

The print *Arctic Evening* was also produced in 2003 and has many of the features of *Family in Tent*.

Indeed, *Family in Tent* could very well have been the inspiration for this print release. The composition has many similarities. We see the same characters inhabiting the scene. The man is sipping tea while the woman, with a baby on her back, is tending to the *quiliq*. Country food of clams and fish are in the foreground. Two children sleep soundly, with an empty can of Crush at the head of the bed. Supplies are lined up in the background: Red Rose tea, a carton of cigarettes, flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, Pilot biscuits, and toilet paper. In contrast to the drawing, the print is rich in colour: warm yellow, black, grey-blue, and orange predominate. The colour applied by the printer alters the image significantly, giving it a warm hue, perhaps from the light of the setting sun or the dim light from the *quiliq*.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Arctic Evening*, 2003, lithograph, 57 x 76.5 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections.

Shuvinai has been a regular contributor to the Cape Dorset Annual Print Collection since 1997, though sales of her prints are not as robust as those of some of the other studio artists. Perhaps this is because her drawings don't easily translate graphically to the medium of printmaking, or maybe her subject matter is too complex and detailed. It remains that the prints with more contemporary content do not sell as well as traditional imagery, which also may be a stumbling block for her work. *Arctic Evening*, however, is a successful print and lovely companion piece for the print drawing *Family in Tent*.

THREE COUSINS 2005



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Three Cousins*, 2005
Fineliner pen and pencil crayon on paper, 66 x 102 cm
Private collection

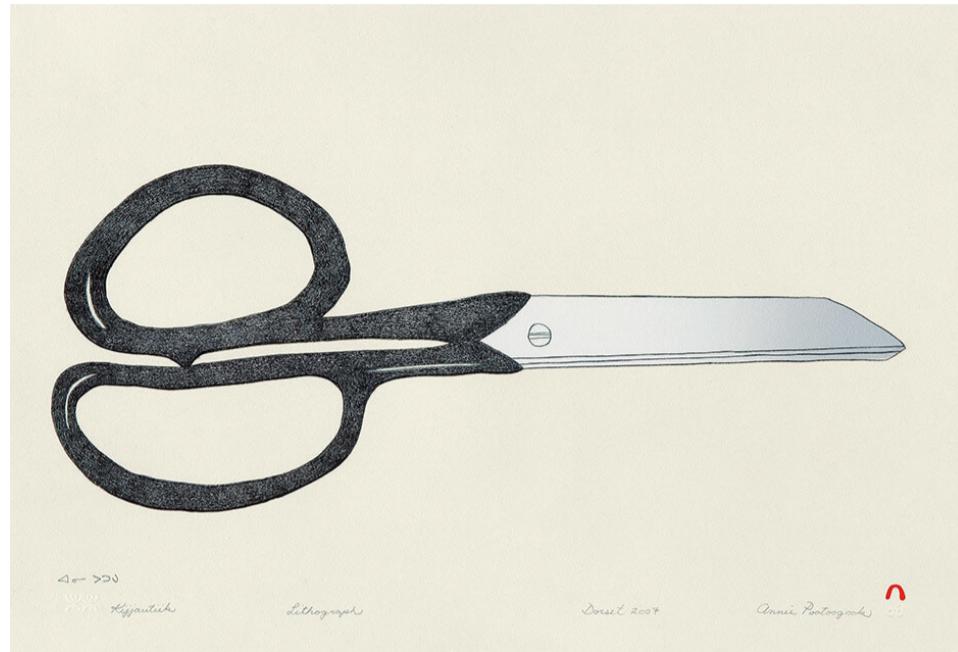
Three Cousins is one of the first drawings in which Shuvinai Ashoona employs saturated colour in parts of her work. In the piece, Shuvinai depicts a recurring subject in Inuit art: artists presenting their drawings for a buyer. This theme appears in work by Inuit artists of earlier generations, such as *The Critic*, c. 1963, by Pitseolak Ashoona (c. 1904-1983), and *Tourist Photographing Woman Drawing*, 1981-82, by Napachie Pootoogook (1938-2002). Shuvinai would have seen these drawings in the studio. Here she depicts each of the trio holding up one of her own drawings. On the left, Shuvinai holds a drawing of a woman with her signature blue eyes, and this woman is also holding up a drawing. The middle figure is identified as Siassie Kenneally (b. 1969), holding a drawing of a fish head. Siassie's work often includes animal and fish parts, the ingredients for soup or a meal. On the right, Annie Pootoogook (1969-2016) is holding up *Kijjautiik* (Scissors), 2007, created during a period when she was isolating objects from her everyday life and depicting them on a white ground (for example, a red bra, a Coleman stove, a bottle of Tylenol).



The saturated colour is used only in the drawings held by the cousins, creating a contrast to the faces above. The images in the drawings identify and date the artists in the picture. By representing specific work of each of the three artists at the time of its creation, *Three Cousins* cleverly stops time, documenting not only Shuvinai's life and work but also that of her peers and successfully capturing the enthusiasm of the artists working at the studio in 2005.

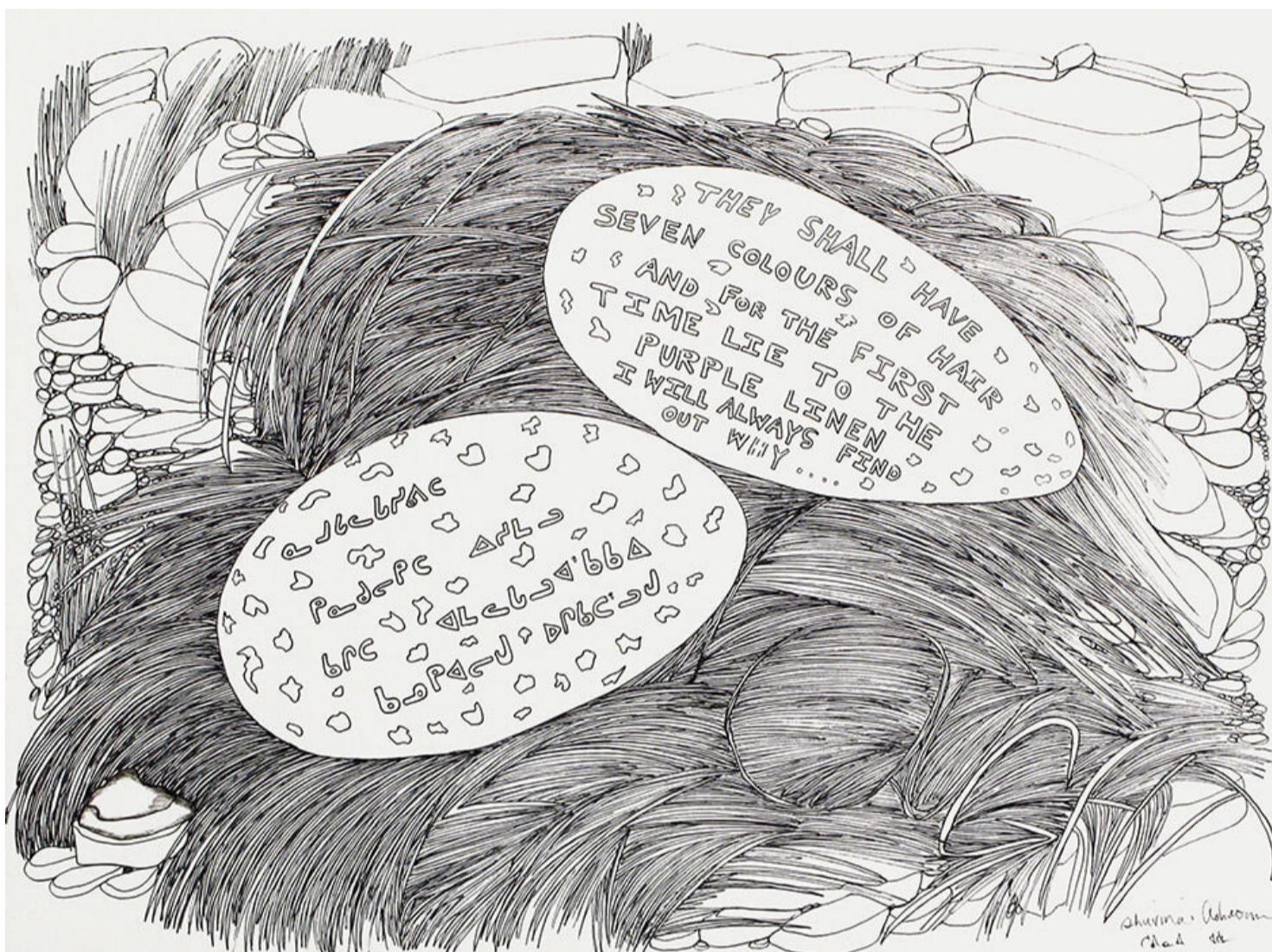
Three Cousins was featured in *Ashoona: Third Wave, New*

Drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona, Siassie Kenneally and Annie Pootoogook, a 2006-7 exhibition at the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton. The exhibition showcased new talent from Kinngait while highlighting the strong familial connections and influences among generations of artists in the small community. The three artists featured in the exhibition are first cousins and granddaughters of Pitseolak Ashoona and have come to be known as third-generation Cape Dorset artists. At the time this work was produced, the three cousins were working side by side in the studio at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative. They were part of an emerging group of third-generation artists producing groundbreaking and provocative drawings. Although they adopted elements from earlier generations of Inuit artists, in particular from their grandmother, each developed a personal style that combines the traditional with the new.



Annie Pootoogook, *Kijjautiik (Scissors)*, 2007, lithograph, 38.1 x 56.5 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections.

COMPOSITION (EGG IN LANDSCAPE) 2006



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Egg in Landscape)*, 2006

Fineliner pen on paper, 51 x 66 cm

Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau

For a number of years the image of a duck egg featured prominently in many of Shuvinai Ashoona's landscapes. (A duck is *pitseolak* in Inuktitut, but whether Shuvinai was making a reference to her grandmother Pitseolak Ashoona [c. 1904-1983] is speculative.) Fresh eggs are considered a delicacy in the Arctic. Shuvinai would have foraged for eggs in the summer, finding them in nests on the land. *Composition (Egg in Landscape)* stands apart from Shuvinai's other works with duck eggs, for its strong conceptual aspect and the poetry of its textual elements.

Composition (Egg in Landscape) pictures two eggs in a nest of grass. The rocky terrain and vegetation are drawn primarily in Fineliner pen; the grasses that form the nest are heavily rendered and quite detailed. Here, the two eggs appear to be messengers, with English text, Inuktitut syllabics, and symbols drawn on the surface of the eggs. The text is poetic but cryptic: "They shall have seven colours of hair and for the first time lie to the purple linen / I will always find out why...." The syllabics on the other egg translate as "Where are we going, who are we? Thoughts? Brain. Wondering if it's going to open. How



to spit?"¹ In addition to the text on the eggs, the word "thought" is delightfully embedded in and formed by blades of grass. The upper left corner reveals the "TH," with "OUGHT" in the bottom right. The division of the word is also a bit of wordplay by the artist and is reflective of the musings she placed on the eggs.

The intention or meaning of textual elements in Shuvinai's work is often difficult to determine or define. In this drawing, the words seem to have something to do with fertility and new life. The archetype of the egg certainly represents such themes in Western art and literature, but it's risky to use such associations to interpret Shuvinai's thoughts, writings, and drawings. The Beat poets of the 1950s, "a group of writers who were interested in changing consciousness and defying conventional writing"² with their free-form, rhythmic writing, surrealist influences, and highly expressive individualism, offer an intriguing parallel to the artist's process with text. In *Composition (Egg in Landscape)*, textual elements evoke a sense of wonder and cataclysm simultaneously, not unlike the best writing of the Beat poets.

Egg and Tools, 2004-5, shows another fine example of Shuvinai's use of eggs in her compositions. A conceptually rich piece, this ink and coloured pencil drawing features clusters of three and four eggs nestled in an almost flowing rockscape, another recurring motif in Shuvinai's work.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Egg and Tools*, 2004-5, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 51.2 x 66 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery.

COMPOSITION (PEOPLE, ANIMALS, AND THE WORLD HOLDING HANDS)
2007–8

Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)*, 2007–8

Ink and coloured pencil on paper, 66 x 102 cm

Collection of Edward J. Guarino

Indigenous cultures share a deep respect for the circle of life. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit,¹ a phrase used to describe the traditional knowledge and values passed down through generations, rests on a belief in the interconnectedness of life. This way of thinking is aptly reflected in *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)*, an expressive, disquieting circular composition drawn from Shuvinai Ashoona's imagination. In this drawing, groups of figures, hand in hand, form a ring around a central image.

The human figures in the composition are primarily Inuit, presented in both traditional and contemporary dress. On the right, a half-white, half-Inuit nursing mother is held by an elder who sits across from a kneeling figure with two children in the hood of her *amauti* parka. Interspersed alongside them is a winged dragon with one flipper and one hand, a Sedna (sea goddess) mermaid figure wearing one *kamik* (boot), and the planet Earth (with arms and hands) completing the circle. In the centre of the circle is a brown bear, overlaid by a polar bear, overlaid by a seal, and finally by a char on top.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Untitled*, 2012, graphite, coloured pencil, and ink on paper, 50 x 65 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.

Shuvinai remarks on the composition: "I was thinking that they were having a meeting, a world meeting about the seals, polar bears ... rethinking what the world would be for the animals. I started thinking that all of these animals would be friends, even some of the dangerous animals I have seen in the movies are there."² Her sentiment is reflected in the words of Black Elk (1863-1950), a spiritual adviser to the Oglala Sioux: "The Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished."³ Black Elk met the poet and writer John G. Neihardt in 1930 and asked Neihardt to share his story with the world.

New York-based collector Edward J. Guarino also refers to this circle of life when asked why he purchased this drawing: "Although Shuvinai Ashoona's *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)* expresses a desire for harmony among all living beings, I was initially attracted to the work because of its bold colours and idiosyncratic symbolism. I was also drawn to the piece because the artist once again creates a world unlike any that exists. It is at once strange, whimsical, and profound."⁴

COMPOSITION (TWO MEN AND A SPIDER) 2007–8



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Two Men and a Spider)*, 2007-8

Fineliner pen and coloured pencil on paper, 56 x 76 cm

Private collection

Composition (Two Men and a Spider) was first exhibited in *Noise Ghost: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*, a 2009 show at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto, featuring the work of Toronto artist Shary Boyle (b. 1972) and Shuvinai Ashoona. *Noise Ghost* intentionally paired two contemporary Canadian artists on a level playing field, rather than distinguishing between Inuit and contemporary art. This approach was a game changer, since it challenged many preconceptions about Inuit art, including the assumption that Inuit imagery is drawn from a not-so-distant past when Inuit were still living on the land.

This particular drawing marks a dramatic shift in Shuvinai's subject matter—from her northern surroundings to her imaginings. When asked about *Composition (Two Men and a Spider)*, Shuvinai said, "There are these kind of movies, and so I started putting in some of the animals that we got up here, up north, and then that movie we saw did not look the same at all. His arms were on fire and the white-headed man had beaming eyes. Boy, were they ever different. It was fun rethinking them a little bit."¹

At the time of the exhibition, Shary Boyle used her artist fee to purchase *Composition (Two Men and a Spider)*. The synchronicity between the artists' work was palpable and is reflected in a short piece in *Canadian Art* magazine in which Shary writes poetically about her interaction with Shuvinai's work:

The moment I encountered this image I felt an instant connection with it. My response was intense and euphoric, a deep rush of excited bewilderment. The confusion produced by the disfigurement of the characters' faces made me feel like keening. Simultaneously, I wanted to laugh my head off. What is going on??! Look at the pencil-crayon marks, the vertical scratchiness—and the faded, complementary colours. Look at the three points of black. Then step back and see the overall composition: the figures making a pretzel of their arms, entwining fingers, crossing legs—while the tree, beheaded and with spread-eagled roots, wraps an arm protectively around the strugglers. Now lean in closer. Check out those whiskers!! My god. Any communication between the anemone and the walrus is bound to be a mangled, physical thing. But what really pushes it over the edge for me are the two silent players: the perching tarantula and the stiff green fruit.²



Shary Boyle, *Scotch Bonnet*, 2007, ink and gouache on paper, 60.96 x 45.72 cm, private collection.

TITANIC, NASCOPIE, AND NOAH'S ARK 2008



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Titanic, Nascopie, and Noah's Ark*, 2008

Ink and coloured pencil on paper, 122 x 241 cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Shuvinai Ashoona had not yet been born when the *Nascopie* sank in 1947, but she would have heard the story from the elders. The RMS *Nascopie* served for many years as a supply ship to the Hudson's Bay Company's northern outposts, delivering food, clothing, and other supplies to remote communities. On July 21, 1947, the ship struck an uncharted reef off Beacon Island at the entrance to Cape Dorset harbour. The local Inuit attempted to salvage any goods they could from the frigid waters. In the end, on September 25, the ship was ripped from the reef by a storm, broke in half, and the bow slid beneath the water. The stern, still clinging to the reef, was swept off by another storm less than a month later. The sinking of the *Nascopie* figures in the work of many artists from the region.

A sizable work with a remarkably specific title in the artist's oeuvre, featured in the exhibition *Noise Ghost: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*, 2009, at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery in Toronto, *Titanic, Nascopie and Noah's Ark* is a phenomenal example of one of the artist's many renderings of the ship. In this large drawing, the bow of the *Nascopie* appears on the left. On the ship's side the artist has written the names *Titanic*, *Nascopie*, and *Noah's Ark*. The ship is pursuing a large squid, which in turn is pursuing four small fishing boats that exit on the right. In the background a highly detailed rocky landscape is rich with the colours of summer. In the centre of the landscape is a cave with a winged polar bear emerging from it, growling at the passing squid, protecting her three young scampering from the cave behind her.

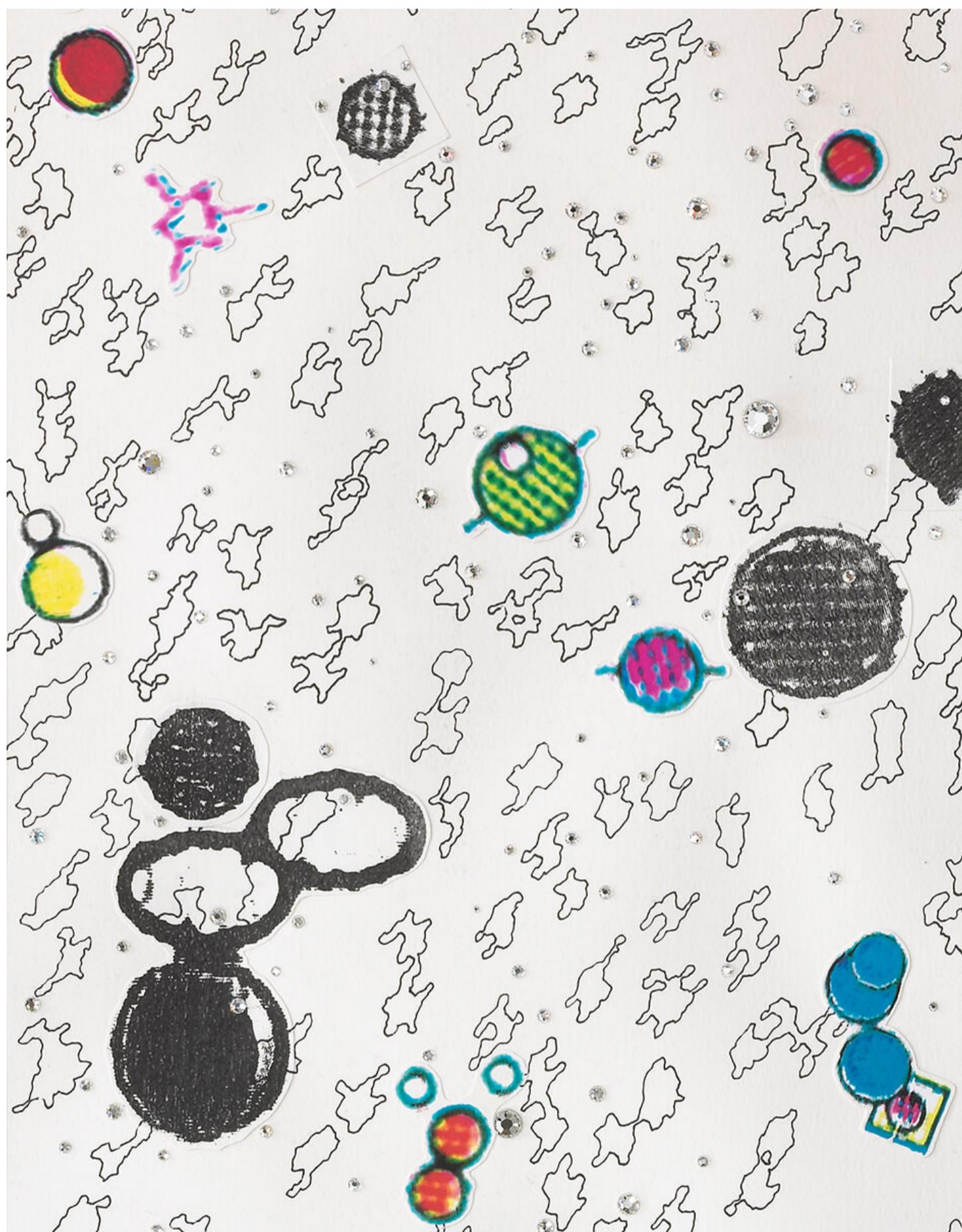


Shuvinai Ashoona, *Sinking Titanic*, 2012, graphite, coloured pencil, and Fineliner pen on paper, 124.5 x 122 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery.

The scene combines the everyday and the fantastical, leaving the viewer pondering what exactly the message of the picture is. Herein lies the brilliance of Shuvinai's approach. What is the significance of the giant squid? Why is the ship in pursuit of the squid? Of particular interest is the ship itself: each of the three titular ships denotes an epic journey and a fateful end. Shuvinai's reference to these three ships, adapted from movies she has seen and stories she has heard, imply a catastrophic event. The work highlights Shuvinai's tendency to take references from different eras and place them together, fusing the past, present, and the uncertain future in an imaginative context that also draws on memory and real life.

Similarly, *Sinking Titanic*, 2012, is the artist's interpretation of the most famous shipwreck, which occurred a hundred years earlier. People fall from the sinking ship, screaming, with arms outstretched. This, no doubt, is Shuvinai's rendition based on James Cameron's 1997 movie, one of her favourites. Perhaps because the *Nascopie* has a very real history in Cape Dorset, ship disasters have more relevance for the artist, instilling a sense of loss.

EARTH AND SKY 2008



Shuvinai Ashoona, with John Noestheden, *Earth and Sky* (detail), 2008

Pen and black ink, coloured pencil, graphite, collage, and adhered glass crystals on wove paper, 34.3 x 485 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



In 2008, Alberta-based curator Wayne Baerwaldt invited John Noestheden (b. 1945) from Regina and Shuvinai Ashoona from Cape Dorset to meet in Calgary and collaborate on a five-metre-vertical drawing that would be made into a forty-metre banner for an event to be held at the Basel Art Fair in Switzerland: the *Stadthimmel* ("Citysky") project, curated by Klaus Littmann with assistance from Edek Bartz.

The original drawing for the banner was produced by Shuvinai and Noestheden while they were in residence at the Illingworth Kerr Gallery at the Alberta College of Art + Design in Calgary. The creative process entailed Shuvinai attacking the paper directly with her Fineliner pen, rarely lifting it off the page, while John watched closely and made comments. John "drew" with the photocopier, placing dozens of cut-out stars and glass crystals on the paper. They negotiated where Shuvinai would stop the earth and John would start the heavens, and where some of John's stars would find themselves in both realms. Shuvinai developed five horizons and decided that stars could exist between those multiple horizons. Shuvinai also saw the stars as snowflakes and requested that they be placed on her stone outcroppings. Ambiguity, experimentation, daring, and playfulness all had a role in this highly collaborative effort.¹

The result was *Earth and Sky*, a mixed-media drawing that combines Arctic landscapes and astronomical bodies, primarily rendered in black and white line drawings with occasional punctuations of bold, bright colour. The drawing was then commercially transferred to a forty-metre banner that spanned the streetscape in Basel, introducing a world of stars and Arctic wildlife to the pedestrians below. A second fifty-metre banner was produced for Toronto's Nuit Blanche later that year.



Installation of *Earth and Sky* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2013, April 26–September 2, 2013, photograph by Janice Pine.



Shuvinai Ashoona, with John Noestheden, *Earth and Sky* (details), 2008.

The *Earth and Sky* banner continued on its international journey. It was included in the 2012 Sydney Biennale *All Our Relations*, curated by Gerald McMaster and Catherine de Zegher (former curators at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto). The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, which acquired the original drawing for its permanent collection, also presented *Earth and Sky* in *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art* in 2013. The banner ran the entire length of the colonnade at the main entrance. *Sakahàn* was a landmark



exhibition of international scope, bringing together more than 150 works of recent Indigenous art by more than eighty artists from sixteen countries reflecting on what it means to be Indigenous today.

OH MY GOODNESS 2011

Shuvinai Ashoona, *Oh My Goodness*, 2011

Coloured pencil and Fineliner pen on wove paper, approx. 21 x 25.5 cm

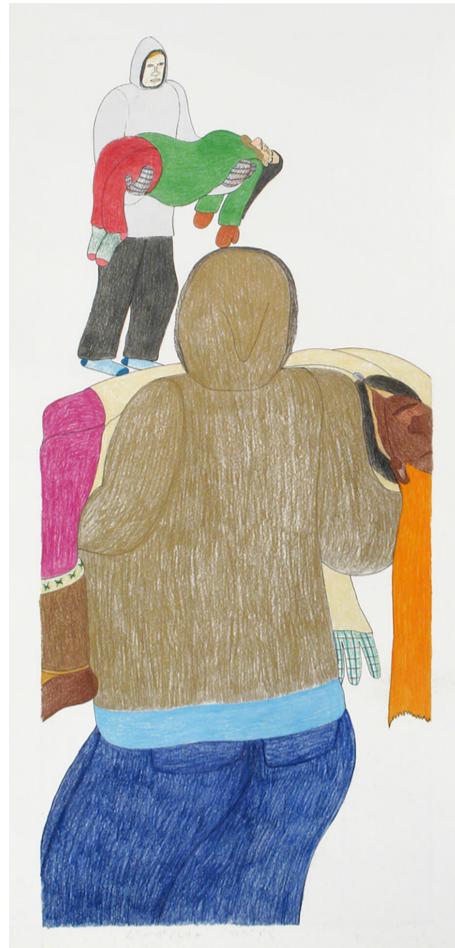
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



Unlike many contemporary artists today, Shuvinai rarely offers a personal point of view on social or political conditions in her artwork, although on certain occasions she has produced drawings that illustrate global and local crises that upset her. *Oh My Goodness*, 2011, is a frightening and powerful vertical drawing that presents the tragic death of a mangled young person.

A large, otherworldly figure carries the child's body in its arms toward the viewer. The central figure could be a monster or a shaman, as suggested by its mouth that combines an antler, teeth, and a small tusk. Its eyes are replaced by globes, a motif repeated in Shuvinai's work after 2011. On the clothing of the figures, the text that appears in English and Inuktitut refers to the 2011 tsunami in Japan. Shuvinai has spoken about this event and certainly would have seen coverage on television. William Ritchie (b. 1954), the studio manager at Kinngait Studios, reminds us: "The tsunami really stuck in her head. The Inuktitut *sunamii* means 'what else,' so she mixes the two with both English and Inuktitut spelling. Joemie [Tapaungai] says on the [large figure's] chest patch it reads: 'Look at this, The wave did it, Going back and forth.' On the kid's parka pocket pouch it says: 'Sleep well.'"¹ The wordplay of *tsunami* and *sunamii* refer to the cycles of tragedy. The prefab dwelling in the background signals the setting as Cape Dorset, not the torn coast of Japan.

A link can be made between this work and another socially engaged vertical drawing titled *Carrying Suicidal People*, 2011, which is about tragedy and trauma, loss and grief, but this time closer to home. Suicide rates in Nunavut are as high as ten times the national average,² with many choosing to end their own lives, some as young as ten years old. This piece depicts two men, each carrying a young woman who has killed herself. One man has his back to us and carries the deceased, draped in his arms with her long red hair flowing downward. He is walking toward a second man, also carrying a body in his arms. This drawing does not refer to a specific event: we do not know who the people are. As is her way, Shuvinai simply presents a sad, quiet moment in time without moralizing.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Carrying Suicidal People*, 2011, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 127 x 61 cm, collection of John and Joyce Price.

EARTH TRANSFORMATIONS 2012



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Earth Transformations*, 2012
Coloured pencil and Conté crayon on black paper, 123 x 124.5 cm
Collection of Martha Burns and Paul Gross

Earth Transformations is one of many works completed by Shuvinai Ashoona between 2011 and 2014 that feature the planet. Earth appears in many combinations, including piles of globes, links of globes connected by harpoons or lightning bolts, and faces and body parts made of globes. A large selection of these works was shown in a 2012 exhibition under the title *Shuvinai's World(s)* at Feheley Fine Arts in Toronto. Though rendering geographically "accurate" depictions of Earth's continents does not preoccupy Shuvinai, she consistently represents globes as "earthlike" and/or suitable for life.¹



Earth Transformations is a stunning example from the exhibition *Shuvinai's World(s)*. This large drawing was made on black paper, a medium not uncommon at Kinngait Studios and one that provides a dramatic alternative to white paper. The image is first outlined in white, contrasting the black background, and later filled in with coloured pencil, pastel, or Conté crayon—or any combination of these. Studio manager William Ritchie (b. 1954) says, “[Shuvinai’s] remarkable sense of colour becomes very apparent, particularly when she is working on black paper. She uses rich, saturated colours that resonate together.”²



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Purple Bird Transformation)*, 2010, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 61 x 160 cm, collection of Stephanie Comer and Rob Craigie.

Many of the motifs that Shuvinai used during this period can be seen in *Earth Transformations*. The large globe in the upper left displays an aerial view of a community, complete with wildlife: a walrus, a caribou, and a lemming are running about. The globe seems to grow out of two human legs, complete with sky-blue toenail polish on the feet. Circling the legs are the tentacles of an octopus—dark purple with blue undersides that have suction cups—stretching through the lower half of the picture plane. The arms of the figure are made of a string of globes with clawed hands that seem to be grasping for something.

On the far right an Inuk dressed in a traditional parka and *kamik* boots is holding up a drawing (again, a motif Shuvinai has used before). One of his arms is made of globes with a clawed hand, matching the hybrid figure on the left. The inset drawing shows a hunter holding a rifle. He is kneeling behind a stretched canvas, perhaps using it as a blind to camouflage himself. Shuvinai has thus created two levels of inset images: the man on the right holding a canvas and the hunter in that image, holding a canvas, presumably of the same Kinngait landscape pictured in the first inset.

HAPPY MOTHER 2013



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Happy Mother*, 2013
Coloured pencil, graphite and ink on paper, 123 x 127.5 cm
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts



Happy Mother centres on a blue-eyed, blond-haired woman in labour, presenting a crowning baby whose head is encircled in globes. She is embraced by a prehistoric bird, which seems to be supporting her as she gives birth. Shuvinai Ashoona states, "I was thinking that the hair was in the shape of a circle, the same as the circle of the world from up above."¹ Based on the artist's comment, it can be interpreted that the birthing mother may be part of an underworld or otherworld. In relation to this work, Shuvinai has not mentioned being witness to childbirth nor her own very real and personal experience of giving birth. That she has not made such comments in relation to *Happy Mother*, nor other works that deal with the subject of a woman giving birth, for example *Birthing Scene*, 2013, suggests that the images may be intended to depict a depersonalized experience, which in turn allows them to convey a greater sense of the mystical or supernatural.

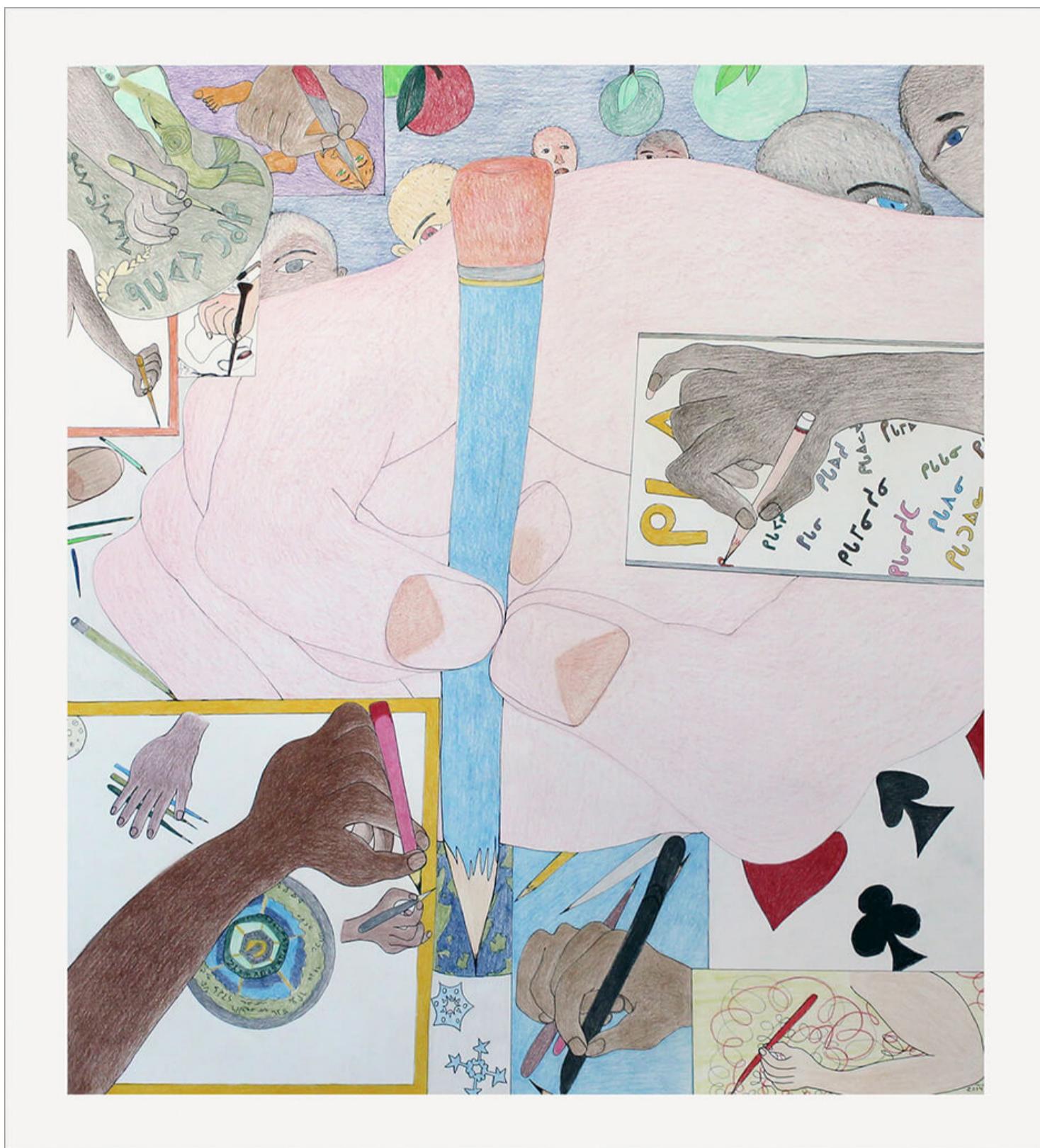
As the title of the work states, the woman appears to be delighted, despite the physical pain of childbirth. She seems to be human, but closer examination reveals monstrous appendages, with a gigantic claw-like hand that morphs from her left wrist and a dark, hairy right leg that resembles the leg of a caribou. This type of hybrid person is seen in other works such as *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)*, 2007, in which the artist creatively and seamlessly adds animal appendages, such as a swan's ear or a lobster claw, to human figures. In *Happy Mother*, the midwife is an enormous bird with a colourful head and large blue, toucan-like beak. The bird's orange and light-blue wings wrap delicately around the woman from behind, gently holding her breasts, while its clawed feet seem to grip the land for leverage. The background illustrates lush greenery that is at odds with the rocky ground and plywood on which the mother and the bird squat.

Traditional Inuit births involved a midwife in the birthing process, except in cases where the supernatural was expected to intervene and a shaman was sent in as well.² Perhaps the bird is acting as the shaman here? The infant that is being pulled from the womb by the delicate hand of the birthing mother is crowned with six small globes (a motif that appears repeatedly in much of Shuvinai's work of this period), which are dancing atop its head. This birth is mystical. The infant seems destined for Earth, but as with many of Shuvinai's tableaux, one can only guess.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Birthing Scene*, 2013, coloured pencil and ink over traces of graphite on paper, 127 x 71 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

COMPOSITION (HANDS DRAWING) 2014



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Hands Drawing)*, 2014

Pencil crayon on paper, 120 x 108.5 cm

Collection of Martha Burns and Paul Gross



Composition (Hands Drawing) embodies many of the motifs that have appeared in Shuvinai Ashoona's work since 2005. The graphic centre of this composition is a large white hand holding a blue pencil. This hand is, in turn, circled by multiple arms and hands of varying skin colours. Shuvinai often draws people with different skin tones and hair and eye colours, sometimes referring to a specific person but more often to humanity in general—a humanity she has seen on television.

The many hands seem to spin around the picture plane while the industrious pencils work away. Each hand in the drawing grasps a pencil and each is working on a different drawing, creating a collage effect on the page. Pencils, the lifeblood of the artist, are littered throughout the composition, waiting to be picked up and used.

The pencils work on green and blue globes, mandala-like stars, and doodles. The globes—or, as they have come to be known, "Shuvinai's world(s)"—are a familiar motif for the artist. Notable also is the presence of the large heart, spade, club, and diamond from a deck of cards in the far right corner of the drawing. The card suits appear in many works by the artist, as do Inuktitut syllabics, also seen here.

Stories from the Bible resonate with Shuvinai, and iconography from these stories appears in her work. For example, the artist references the Garden of Eden in *Untitled (David)*, 2007-8, in which she includes two green apples and one red apple at the very top of the page. Shuvinai states, "I had a book about Adam. I started rethinking about that book and put it with some of the things from the Bible. Lizards and snakes, maybe the snake of Adam and Eve.

Temptation."¹ The drawing *Composition (Time Interrupted)* from 2006 also employs the motif of the apple, here the apple tree, in an image that, like *Composition (Hands Drawing)*, employs Shuvinai's technique of layering images.

In *Composition (Hands Drawing)* six bald faces peer from behind the pieces of paper in the drawing, partly obscured by the drawing hands. These faces have stubble instead of hair and appear sickly. Who these onlookers are is a mystery, but like those holding the pencils, their skin tones and eye colours vary. This work is perplexing and unsettling, yet it effectively represents the fascinations and fears of the artist in a beautiful, playful composition.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Time Interrupted)*, 2006, ink and pencil crayon on paper, 101.6 x 26 cm, Art Gallery of Guelph.

COMPOSITION (ATTACK OF THE TENTACLE MONSTERS) 2015



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Attack of the Tentacle Monsters)*, 2015

Ink and coloured pencil on paper, 96.5 x 123 cm

Collection of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais

Composition (Attack of the Tentacle Monsters) is a major work in the evolution of Shuvinai Ashoona's practice. It was first exhibited in 2015 in a collaborative two-person show at Feheley Fine Arts in Toronto and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain in Montreal. Titled *Universal Cobra: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*, this groundbreaking show included work by each artist, plus a number of exquisite collaborative drawings.¹



In Shuvinai's body of work from the second decade of the twenty-first century, surreal elements reveal an increasing freedom in imagery that juxtaposes fantastical monsters, sea creatures, people, and popular culture in rich colour. *Composition (Attack of the Tentacle Monsters)* shows this to brilliant effect and is at once violent and humorously absurd. Two large octopi stand on legs. One, bright orange, has the hairy legs of a wolf-like beast with large red claws. Oddly shaped eyes encircle the head, peering in all directions. This octopus joins arms with a grey one with the white legs of a human. Instead of eyes, a ring of faces encircles its head; these faces have different skin tones and hair colours typical of Shuvinai's representation of humankind.



Installation view of *Universal Cobra* at Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal, 2015, photograph by Paul Literland. *InaGodadavida* is on the right.

A white, blond-haired man in a bright green parka stands in the centre of the picture. The man's arms are raised and his mouth open in alarm. The background is a detailed rocky outcrop typical of the artist's landscapes. A photographer, crouched beneath the large paw of one of the monsters, seems oblivious to the drama that is unfolding above him, focusing his lens instead on the small dancing creatures before him. At the left side of the picture plane we see the arm of a person attempting to pull the orange monster away. There are seldom explanations for Shuvinai's imaginings; rather, they appear as dramatic stories that delight the artist.

Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle (b. 1972) both create drawings that are simultaneously personal and dream-like, suggesting altered states of mind and shifting perceptions. In the *Universal Cobra* exhibition, they literally shared the paper in five of the works. The collaborative process involved Shary beginning the drawings, leaving ample space for Shuvinai to come to the work and expand on the image. The results are compelling and speak to the natural synchronicity between these two artists. *InaGodadavida*, 2015, is a spectacular composition that is both fanciful and disturbing, melding the motifs of both artists in a seamless composition. Boyle explains, "Shuvinai came up with the title. After we made the drawing and were looking at it together, she said something like 'When I see that area, the river flowing toward there, I just hear In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida, baby,' and at that point she started to sing the Iron Butterfly song."²

Both *Composition (Attack of the Tentacle Monsters)* and *InaGodadavida* showcase the progression and mastery of Shuvinai's artistic vocabulary. Hers has become a world of the artist's imaginings that is embedded in her Inuit upbringing and environs but remains singularly her own. Like the Surrealists before her, Shuvinai uses her imagination and free association to produce surprising, unexpected imagery.



Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle, *InaGodadavida*, 2015, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 123 x 218 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

When Shuvinai Ashoona started making drawings at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in the mid-1990s, many of the older artists were baffled by her interpretation of the world. As a third-generation Inuit artist from a famous family of artists, Shuvinai was encouraged and deeply influenced by her predecessors, yet her distinct sensibility and bold experimentation has brought new regard for Inuit art. Beginning in 2012 at the Sydney Biennale, her drawings have been exhibited internationally with the work of other contemporary Canadian artists.



WORKING IN A CO-OPERATIVE MODEL

Shuvinai Ashoona's hometown, Cape Dorset (now referred to as Kinngait), is best known for its production of prints, graphics, carvings, and other types of Inuit art. Her community is said to have more artists per capita than any other in Canada, and the art studios there have the strongest and longest tradition of co-operative artmaking in the Arctic. The co-op was first incorporated in 1959 as the West Baffin Sports Fishing Co-operative and reincorporated under the name West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in 1961; since around 2006 the arts and crafts sector of the co-op has been known as Kinngait Studios. Due to the stability and longevity in the co-op's management, four generations of Inuit artists have been able to develop and sell their art around the world.



LEFT: A street view of the "litho shop" at Kinngait Studios, 2005, photograph by Nancy Campbell. Four generations of Inuit artists have been able to develop their talents at the studios in Kinngait. RIGHT: Pudloo Samayualie, *Untitled*, 2015, coloured pencil and Fineliner pen on paper, 50 x 65 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. Here Pudloo depicts Kinngait Studios.

The early years of the co-op were productive for artists in Cape Dorset who were curious about and interested in participating in a fledgling print program at the studio. With the co-op's support and the opportunity to experiment, Cape Dorset artists seemed to explode onto the Canadian art scene, making their art and their vision part of the Canadian consciousness. Shuvinai Ashoona's grandmother Pitseolak Ashoona (c. 1904–1983) was among the first generation of Inuit artists producing drawings and prints at the studio in the mid-twentieth century.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *To the Print Shop*, 2013, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 72.4 x 57.2 cm, collection of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais. Here, a procession of multiple worlds moves between the two buildings of Kinngait Studios.

Dorset Fine Arts, an initiative to aid in the marketing and distribution of art from Cape Dorset, was established in Toronto in 1978. In 1983 the co-op's then long-time general manager Terrence Ryan (b. 1933-2017) moved from Cape Dorset to Toronto to run Dorset Fine Arts. Ryan and his wife managed the production of the prestigious and sought-after Cape Dorset Annual Print



Collection and catalogue. They also developed a network of dealers across North America and established Dorset Fine Arts in Toronto as an intermediary between the co-op and the dealers, and they helped organize community visits for artists from the South¹ travelling in the North and fine arts programs for the benefit of Cape Dorset printmakers, carvers, and other artists.²



LEFT: Terrence Ryan with Anirnik Peesee and Pitseolak Ashoona, date and photographer unknown. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona drawing a landscape work at the Kinngait Studios, 2006, photograph by Nancy Campbell.

By the time Shuvinai Ashoona began visiting the co-op in the late 1980s, it had long been famous for its annual print collection. Historically drawings have been viewed almost exclusively as source images for prints, but the studio is now a major centre for drawing as well. This shift can be attributed to an increased desire for original drawings in the changing market for Inuit art. Through the advocacy of Dorset Fine Arts; of art adviser and current manager of Kinngait Studios, William Ritchie (b. 1954), who plays an influential role for the co-op artists; and of progressive dealers of contemporary art in the South, such as Feheley Fine Arts and Robert Kardosh Projects, collectors and curators have become aware of the depth and breadth of drawings produced in the North as they enthusiastically purchase, promote, and exhibit this work. At the co-op, Shuvinai's artistic output is remarkably high. In 2015-16 she produced more than fifty works, including drawings and lithographic plates.³

With co-op membership, artists gain access to supplies and the studios, though an increasing number of drawing artists and sculptors elect to work offsite. The economic model is such that, without exception, the co-op pays artists at source for production. The co-op purchases work from its members and the artists are paid according to the scale of the work and the stage of the artist's career. Dorset Fine Arts then sells the work to its distribution galleries, which in turn retail the drawings, prints, and carvings to institutions and private collectors. Historically this has served artists well, as the studio provides materials and workspace as well as the opportunity to network their work in the South. Kinngait Studios remains relevant today and helps northern artists negotiate the art market in the South.



THIRD GENERATION

At Kinngait Studios artists are often referred to by their generation. The first generation includes those who spent their formative lives on the land and were members of the core group of artists involved in the co-op; for example, Shuvinai's grandmother Pitseolak Ashoona is perhaps the best-known and one of the most prolific first-generation Inuit artists. Pitseolak is the grandmother to many artists and has left a significant artistic legacy, contributing hundreds of drawings and prints to the co-op and its print shop.



LEFT: Pitseolak Ashoona drawing in her summer tent in Cape Dorset, June 1967, photograph by Evelyn Crees. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona drawing at Kinngait Studios, November 6, 2014, photograph by William Ritchie.

But Shuvinai has a radically different life from that of her famous grandmother. Pitseolak grew up entirely on the land, before there was a strong influence from the South in her culture, and she travelled to the South only later in her life. Shuvinai has had access to popular culture; when she and her family weren't living on the land, their homes would have had televisions, and Shuvinai watched movies, either at community screenings or on VHS at home. As an adult, she has had very limited access to computer technology and social media. She lives in an era during which global warming has had a noticeable effect on the climate, landscapes, and lifestyles of the North; works such as her *Earths with People on Them*, 2010, can be read as a commentary on the environment—both social and geographical—of the North. Shuvinai has travelled to the South and has collaborated with contemporary Canadian artists.

The second generation comprises those artists who were born on the land but lived in Cape Dorset most of their lives; these are often relatives of artists of the first generation; for example, Shuvinai's father, Kiugak Ashoona (1933–2014), and her aunts Napachie Pootoogook (1938–2002) and Mayoreak Ashoona (b. 1946). The third generation includes artists such as Shuvinai, who have lived their entire lives in and around the community of Kinngait. There is a small, emerging fourth generation of artists who have spent their whole lives living in town, connected throughout the North and the world via limited access to the Internet. Among the promising talents is Saimaiyu Akesuk (b. 1986). Some families, such as the Pootoogooks, Ashoonas, and Ashevaks, are represented in every generation of artists in Kinngait.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Earths with People on Them*, 2010, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 49.6 x 64.8 cm, collection of John and Joyce Price.

Shuvinai Ashoona has altered expectations for Inuit art, her drawings evolving the form from what was once considered a market-driven product to an avant-garde art practice. With some of the other third-generation artists, including her cousin Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016), Kavavaow Manomee (b. 1958), Tim Pitsiulak (1967–2016), and Ningeokuluk Teevee (b. 1963), Shuvinai has begun a practice of self-representation by producing art that responds to the complicated impact of a century of colonial influence in the Arctic. For example, in *Titanic*, *Nascopie*, and *Noah's Ark*, 2008, Shuvinai references the *Titanic*, a ship whose disaster was made current for her in James Cameron's 1997 film of the same name; the *Nascopie*, a notorious supply ship that, until it sank in 1947, delivered goods to the remote hamlet of Cape Dorset;⁴ and Noah's Ark from the Bible. These three ships are conflated in a single boat that chases a giant squid and Inuit fishermen. The past, present, and uncertain future of her home are included in this image's fantastical narrative.

Contemporary work coming out of the North has been described as "sites of resistance" by Australian archaeologist Claire Smith.⁵ Art historian Heather Igloliorte prefers "expressions of resilience."⁶

Resilience is a trait of Canadian Inuit in general, and to see Inuit artwork as an expression of this resilience is to see art as fortifying the culture from within, rather than as a reaction to outside forces.

Yet carving, printmaking, and drawing (the aesthetic categories of the North) can also be viewed as the fluid product of a hybrid of influences. The legacy of the Inuit's unique cultural insights into the workings of nature, humans, and animals (known as Inuit

*Qaujimajatuqangit*⁷) affects the production of work. However, Shuvinai Ashoona, like many artists of the North, is adapting to the rigorous aesthetic scrutiny of the mainstream art world by producing drawings that are ambitious, personal, tough, and informed. Works such as *Earth and Sky*, 2008, or *Oh My Goodness*, 2011, both in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, engage the viewer in a conversation that posits Inuit art as further-reaching than idealized representations of the Canadian North and as an art form with global import.



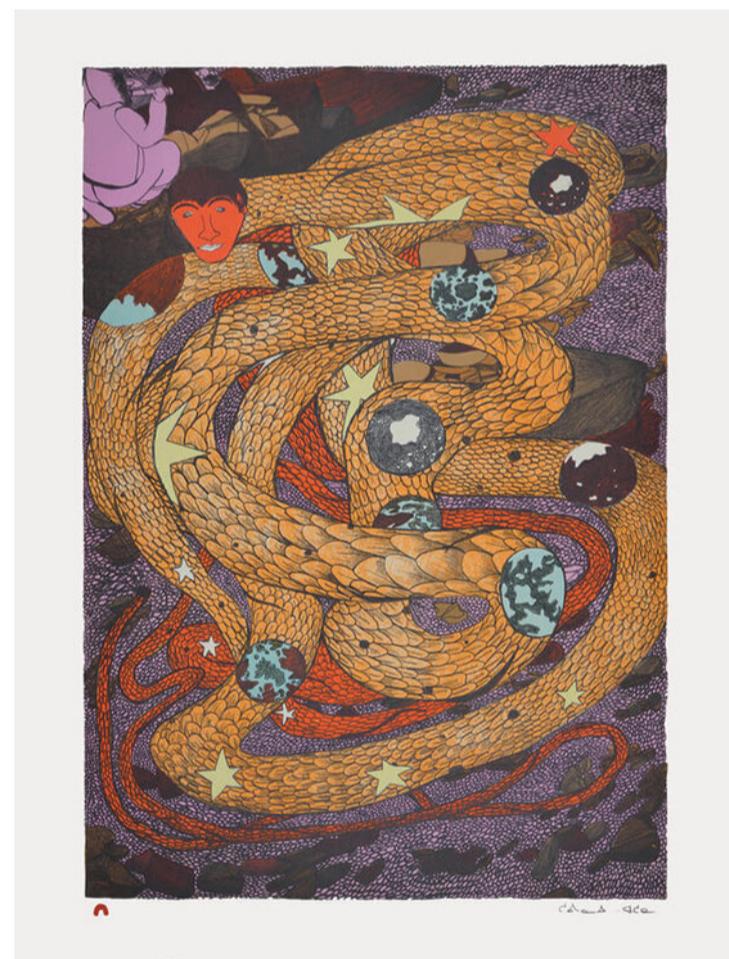
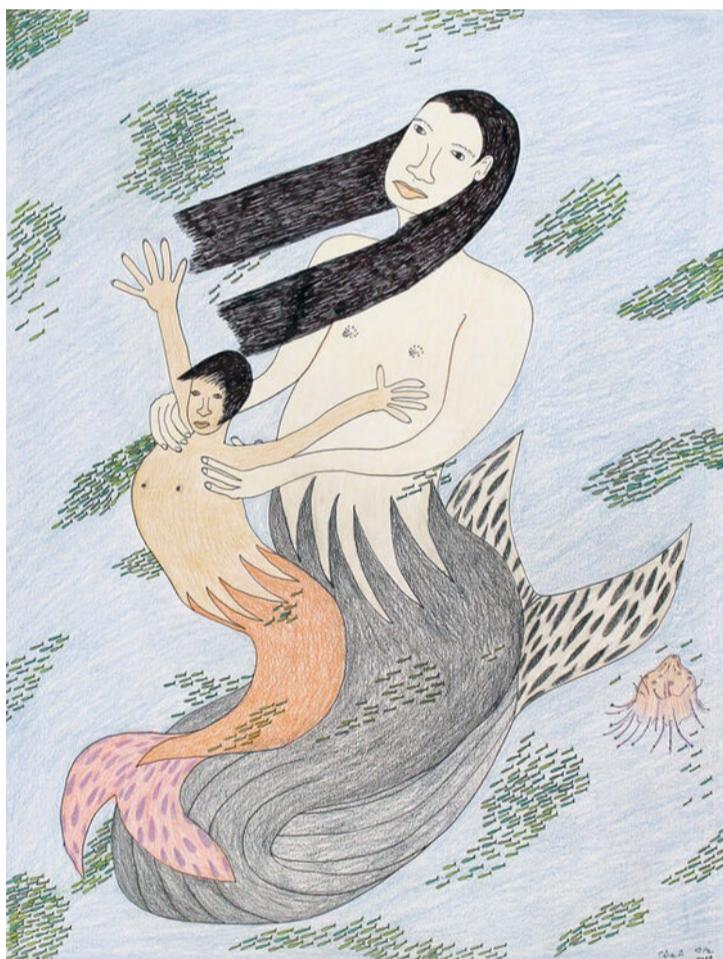
Annie Pootoogook, *Untitled*, 2006, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 50 x 66 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. Contemporary representations of life in the North reveal the impact and influence of colonialism on the Inuit. Here, Annie Pootoogook depicts a family living in a "Western"-style house with accoutrements such as the television, telephone, and guitar.



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Self-Portrait)*, 2006, pencil crayon and ink on paper, 101.6 x 33 cm, collection of Barry Appleton.
RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Untitled (Pink Amauti Hood)*, 2010, coloured pencil and Fineliner pen on wove paper, overall: 246.5 x 124.8 cm; image: 236 x 114.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

PERSONAL ICONOGRAPHY

In many of her drawings Shuvinai Ashoona references traditional Inuit iconography, from daily life to shamans and mythic figures such as the sea goddess Sedna, but she is best known for developing a highly personal iconography. With imagery ranging from closely observed naturalistic scenes of her Arctic home to strange, monstrous, and fantastical visions, she evokes altered states of mind and shifting perceptions. As can be seen in the 2014 print *Inner Worlds*, her bold and often inexplicable images can be disturbing, depicting hybrid creatures and dark, fanciful landscapes. Shuvinai has not been directly influenced by the Surrealists, though her art can be likened to how the movement drew influence from an inner vision. Shuvinai's sources are her vivid imagination and her environment, infused with her fascination with horror films, comic books, and television.



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Mother and Child Sedna)*, 2012, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 66 x 50.8 cm, collection of Dr. C. Peter N. Watson. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Inner Worlds*, 2014, lithograph, 76.3 x 57 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections.

Images drawn from playing cards—the spade, club, diamond, and heart—are present in her work, as can be seen in *Composition (Playing Cards)*, 2007-8, and *Composition (Hands Drawing)*, 2014. Shuvinai carries a deck of cards with her, but rather than playing cards she lays them out in various patterns and seems to enjoy this process as much as the resulting artwork.

Another element is her frequent use of the globe. For a 2012 exhibition at Feheley Fine Arts, entitled *Shuvinai's World(s)*, she developed an entire series of works that feature the image of the globe: floating globes, people holding globes, even a woman giving birth to globes in *Happy Mother*, 2013. The globe drawings are usually optimistic: people of all races hold globes, or globes with arms and hands grasp animal and human hands in a circle of life. In *Shovelling Worlds*, 2013, multiple globes are integrated into a landscape of rocks that a standing human figure shovels, evoking the idea of connection between the terrestrial and extraterrestrial universes and the human connection to both.

In recent years sea creatures have figured prominently in Shuvinai's work. They are often threatening, such as the large squid in *Titanic, Nascopie, and Noah's Ark*, 2008, and the octopi in *Composition (Attack of the Tentacle Monsters)*, 2015. Shuvinai's initial interest in sea creatures likely developed when she was a young girl clamping on the beach, fishing, and seeing large sea creatures such as whales, walruses, and narwhals on the beach for butchering. Her attraction to these images was further fuelled after watching movies such as *Jaws* (one of her favourites) on television. In 2015 when Shuvinai was in Toronto, she visited the Ripley's Aquarium of Canada and was delighted by what she saw.⁸

With the development and repetitive use of a personal iconography, which for Shuvinai includes eggs, playing cards, globes, and fantastical creatures or disjointed figures, she shifted away from common representations seen in Inuit art, away from images of animals or figures placed in sequence on the paper, toward a broader iconography. Her use of distinctive motifs reveals the artist's unique thinking and perceptions but also shows the signs and symbols of everyday life in the contemporary North, as steeped in its Indigenous culture as it is influenced by the South.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Shovelling Worlds*, 2013, coloured pencil, Fineliner pen, and graphite on paper, 127 x 127 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Creatures*, 2015, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 96.5 x 127 cm, collection of Suzanne Lamarre.

NORTH AND SOUTH

The positioning of Inuit art within the mainstream of contemporary art in Canada and beyond is relatively recent. Not only has Inuit art seldom been seen as part of the contemporary canon in Canadian and international museums, but it has also been separated from other Indigenous art in Canadian museums. Shuvinai Ashoona, like her cousin Annie Pootoogook, has repositioned Inuit art. Shuvinai has broken with forms of representation adopted by previous generations of Inuit artists, created works in collaboration with artists from the South, and established an international reach with work that challenges stereotypes about life and artmaking in the North.

Shuvinai's two major collaborations with contemporary Canadian artists have had significant impact on the visibility of her work and signal a new acceptance of Inuit art within global contemporary art exhibitions. Her collaboration with John Noestheden (b. 1945) in 2008 was initiated by Wayne Baerwaldt, a curator with great international reach. The collaboration resulted in the exhibition of a forty-metre banner for the *Stadthimmel* ("Citysky") project, a public art installation at the Basel Art Fair in downtown Basel, Switzerland, curated by Klaus Littmann, with assistance from Edek Bartz. The *Earth and Sky*, 2008, banner was subsequently exhibited in Australia, where it was included in

the 2012 Sydney Biennale *All Our Relations*, curated by Gerald McMaster and Catherine de Zegher, who were former curators at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. The National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa also presented *Earth and Sky in Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art* in 2013. Shuvinai's ongoing collaborations and exhibitions with Toronto artist Shary Boyle (b. 1972), an artist of international status who was the Canadian representative at the Venice Biennale in 2013, have also increased her profile and presented her work in contemporary contexts previously not considered for Inuit artists.



LEFT: Detail of Shuvinai Ashoona and John Noestheden, *Untitled Collaboration* (detail), 2008, pencil crayon and India ink on paper, 157.5 x 101.6 cm, RBC Art Collection. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle, *Self-Portrait*, 2015, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 107 x 88 cm, private collection.

Inuit art has remained slow to hit the radar of international curators. Gradually through the work of artists like Shuvinai, whose drawings and prints challenge outdated expectations of what Inuit art should look like, Inuit artists are gaining international profiles outside the traditional Inuit market system. Shuvinai's work was included in the American exhibition of Canadian art *Oh, Canada: Contemporary Art from North North America* at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), North Adams, Massachusetts, curated by Denise Markonish in 2013, and in *Unsettled Landscapes: SITElines: New Perspectives on Art of the Americas* at SITE Santa Fe, curated by Canadian Candice Hopkins between July 2014 and January 2015. These recent inclusions speak to the increased accessibility of Inuit art material online and to the gradual inclusion of Inuit art in exhibitions of contemporary art.

Shuvinai is also featured in the 2013 Phaidon publication *Vitamin D2: New Perspectives in Drawing*, which highlights a new generation of artists who engage with drawing in innovative ways and introduces these artists to the



world.⁹ Inuit art is constantly changing and adapting, like the culture itself, and Shuvinai Ashoona is pivotal in this change.

SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Shuvinai Ashoona's drawings do not typically carry an overt message but rather present vignettes of life, either real or imagined. Having grown up watching television, Shuvinai is aware of both community and world issues. On the community level, she has addressed subjects such as suicide, which is rampant in Kinngait, as it is everywhere in the North. *Carrying Suicidal People*, 2011, is a drawing of two mythic people gently carrying lifeless, much smaller figures in their arms, the image made on a large, vertical sheet of paper that lends a sense of gravity and import to the work's subject. Shuvinai has created numerous drawings of herself and people she has met or seen in her community or in Iqaluit. She was also deeply affected by television coverage of the 2011 tsunami in Japan, responding with the drawing *Oh My Goodness*, 2011.

Although aware of global issues such as climate change and threats to wildlife in the North, Shuvinai doesn't tackle these subjects directly. Her eloquent description of the scene in *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)*, 2007-8, is telling of her process: "I was thinking that they were having a meeting, a world meeting about the seals, polar bears ... rethinking what the world would be for the animals. I started thinking that all of these animals would be friends, even some of the dangerous animals I have seen in the movies are there."¹⁰

Other works share this optimism for the future, such as *Composition (Holding Up the Globe)*, 2014, which presents a group united in its effort. Shuvinai often mixes up skin, hair, and eye colour in the people who inhabit her drawings. Although Shuvinai never expresses her worldview in words, her drawings consistently reveal empathy for people, creatures, and the land while delighting in the unexpected and the imaginary.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Holding Up the Globe)*, 2014, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 95.3 x 120 cm, collection of BMO Financial Group.



STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Shuvinai Ashoona's style and technique have developed and changed over the twenty-five years that she has been drawing, such that her art is unique among Inuit artists working today. With the exception of some printmaking, Shuvinai has remained steadfast in her drawing practice, which brilliantly employs Fineliner pen, pencil, and coloured pencil. She undertakes challenges in format: large, small, vertical, horizontal, and three dimensional. Collectors, curators, and art lovers worldwide appreciate her signature whimsy and fluid line, ambitious colour, and imaginative content.



MONOCHROMATIC DRAWINGS

At Kinngait Studios, with its history of carving and printmaking, drawing has become a primary practice among many third-generation Inuit artists. Shuvinai Ashoona, with her unlimited imagination and highly personal style and technique, has been an integral player in this innovation.¹ Like the artists of the two generations that came before her, including Kenojuak Ashevak (1927-2013), Pitseolak Ashoona (c. 1904-1983), and Napachie Pootoogook (1938-2002), Shuvinai received no formal training. She honed her drawing skills by working alongside her elders in the studios at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative. In this classic apprenticeship system, one learns by observation. There is a back and forth among the less experienced artists, who watch and imitate one another, as well as the more experienced artists, until they find their unique artistic style, eventually becoming mentors themselves.



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Landscape with Grass*, 1996, Fineliner pen on ivory wove paper, 25.5 x 33.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Low Tide*, 1994, Fineliner pen on ivory wove paper, 33 x 51.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

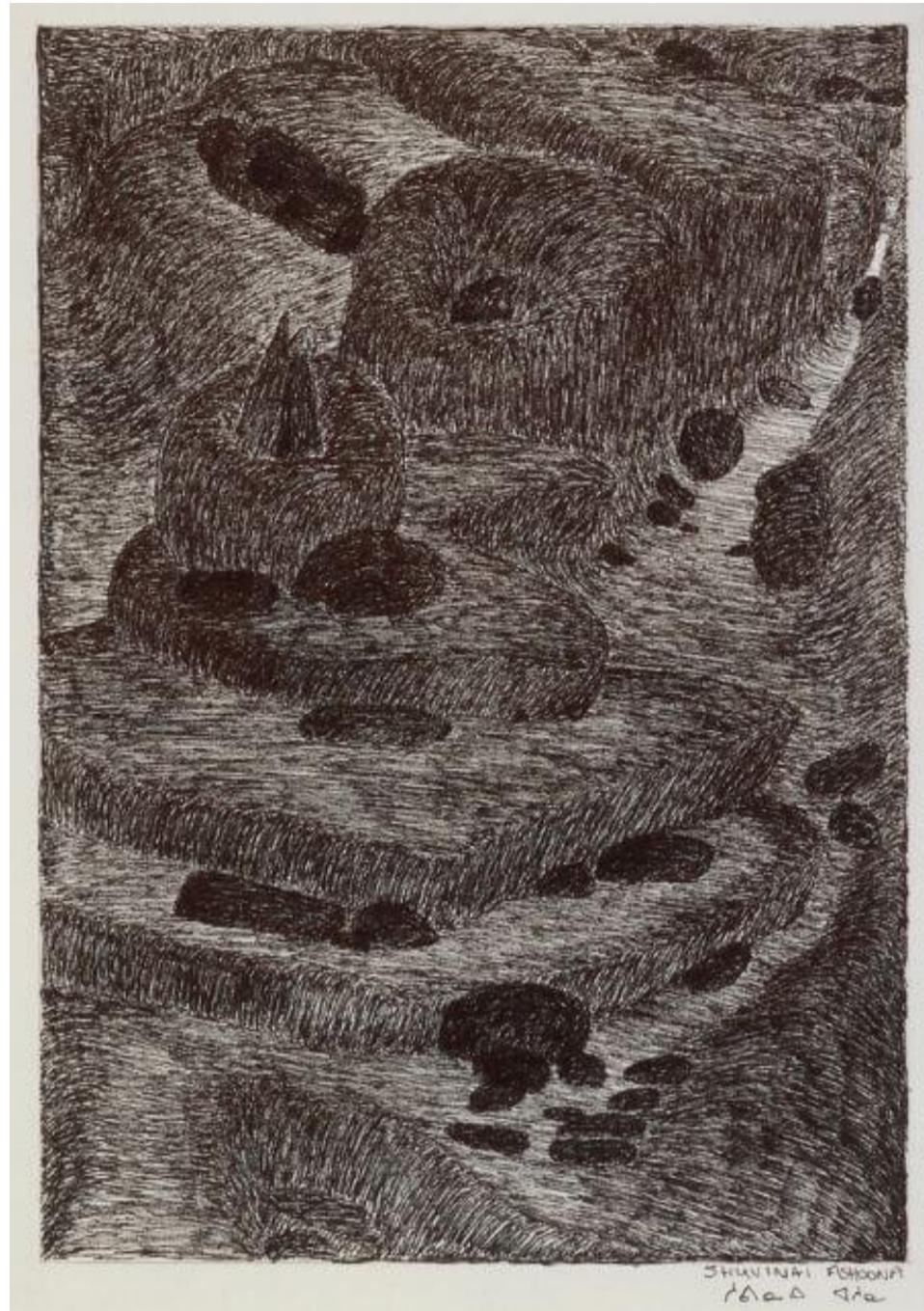
The earliest of Shuvinai's works purchased by the co-op, dating to 1993, are small black and white drawings of Kinngait that depict the rocky tundra, with scant vegetation, houses, and local landmarks. Delicately and sparsely rendered in scratchy black ink, these landscapes are often portrayed from a bird's-eye perspective. One of her earliest recorded drawings, *Community*, 1993-94, shows with specificity structures assembled by the community in relation to the natural environment of Cape Dorset.



In the late 1990s Shuvinai's work shifted. The marks she made on the page became more manic and dense, and she began rendering the landscape using hatching to create depth. At this time she began to focus less on Kinngait and her physical surroundings: in surreal landscapes Shuvinai composed images of subterranean mazes, with steps, tunnels, and caves revealing habitat within the levels of landscape. Works such as *Rock Landscape*, 1998, demonstrate laboured hatching and tiered landscape formations. Such psychologically charged works are much darker than the black and white sketches she made earlier in the decade.

Yet within the period of making these densely rendered drawings, Shuvinai also created images that were less worked and perhaps more playful, integrating human forms and appendages in fantastical vignettes, as can be seen in *Discombobulated Woman*, 1995-96. As Shuvinai experimented with a wider repertoire of images, she tempered her more imaginary and surreal compositions with ink drawings of place, as can be seen in the later monochromatic work *Composition (Tent Surrounded by Rocks)*, 2004-5.

The varied styles and techniques of her early works demonstrate the artist's willingness to experiment and learn. She developed a technical command of the drawing medium by using only black ink and the negative space of white paper. Shuvinai's exceptionally confident drawing style allowed for her to begin using black Fineliner pen, often without lifting the pen off the paper until the composition was almost fully resolved. A more recent monochromatic work, *All Kinds of Spiders in Different Views*, 2011, with its complex composition and intricate, elaborate detail, shows the artist having achieved a level of mastery with this technique.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Rock Landscape*, 1998, Fineliner on ivory wove paper, 33 x 25.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *All Kinds of Spiders in Different Views*, 2011, Fineliner pen over graphite on wove paper, overall: 83 x 125 cm; image: 72.7 x 114.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

INTRODUCTION OF COLOUR

In the early 2000s Shuvinai Ashoona introduced colour into her work, primarily through coloured pencil, which offered her more options for her drawings. She began to apply bright, concentrated colour in select areas, enhancing and punctuating her accomplished ink compositions. An early example of this is *Composition (Community with Six Houses)*, 2004-5, in which she incorporates pink and blue houses within a highly rendered black and white tiered landscape. Once she started experimenting with this medium, Shuvinai quickly developed a sophisticated understanding of the palette and her drawings became filled with colour.

In *Composition (QAMAQ)*, 2006, pencil crayon brings colour to the delicately detailed black Fineliner pen outline of the sealskin tent set against the rocky tundra. Soft greys, browns, and greens effectively recreate the subtle depth of hues in the fur. As Shuvinai became more confident in her use of colours, she boldly added purple or lime green, robin's-egg blue, bright red, and more.

The representation of people in Shuvinai's compositions from the early 2000s to today offers an interesting insight. The people who appear in her drawings share a broad palette. For example, in *Audience*, 2014, the crowd includes people of rich diversity, with a range of skin tones and hair and eye colour, reflecting the many nationalities the artist has been exposed to, both through her access to and love of television, which has broadcast the world to Shuvinai, and in Iqaluit and Kinngait, which are becoming increasingly multicultural communities. Her representations are a method by which Shuvinai directly reflects the racial realities of our modern world.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Audience*, 2014, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 91.4 x 161.3 cm, Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.

TEXTUAL ELEMENTS

Shuvinai Ashoona speaks and writes fluently both English and Inuktitut and she uses both English lettering and Inuktitut syllabics in some of her work. These are not meant to be labels or titles, as in the drawings of artists such as Napachie Pootoogook or Pudlo Pudlat (1916-1992), who often narrate what is happening in the picture; rather, words in Shuvinai's artworks are part of the composition, with the textual elements adding a complexity to the image.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Holding Shirts*, 2015, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 62.5 x 233 cm, National Gallery Canada, Ottawa.

A fine example of Shuvinai's inclusion of text is seen in *Composition (Egg in Landscape)*, 2006, a drawing of two inscribed eggs in a nest of grass. The English wording says, "They shall have seven colours of hair and for the first time lie to the purple linen / I will always find out why...." The syllabics on the other egg translate as: "Where are we going, who are we? Thoughts? Brain. Wondering if it's going to open. How to spit?"² In both languages, the text is lyrical and at the same time cryptic.

Shuvinai's use of language in her drawings is poetic and has a prophetic quality. Though why she sometimes includes textual elements in her work remains unclear, when text appears it offers viewers a rare vantage point from which to observe both the artist's artistic process and her state of mind.

LAYERING

Typically Inuit drawings are two-dimensional renderings of a scene or an activity. The artist places elements on a flat picture plane and makes little use of perspective or depth. Often the compositional elements on the paper are placed side by side or scattered.

Shuvinai's early ink drawings of her community were composed in a similar fashion, but she quickly developed a process of layering images within her pictures.

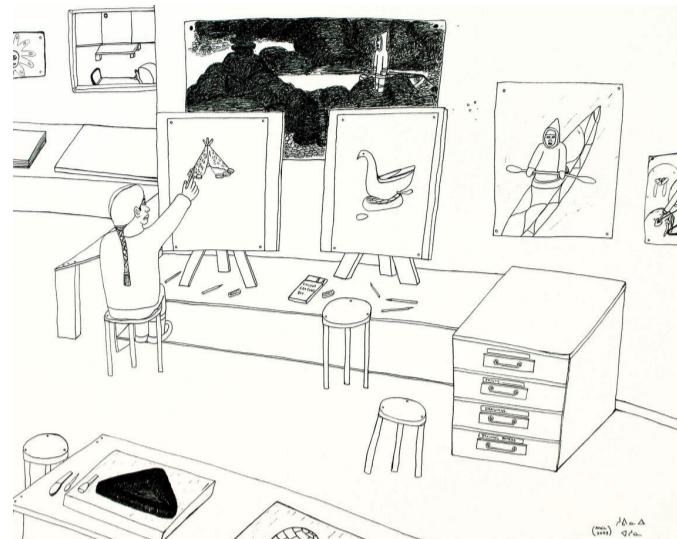
This technique is apparent in *Three Cousins*, 2005, in which Shuvinai represents herself, Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016), and Siassie Kenneally (b. 1969), each presenting one of her drawings to the viewer. The subject of artists holding up drawings for inspection has appeared multiple times in Shuvinai's work—for example in *Composition (Self-Portrait)*, 2005; *Composition (Showing Drawings at the Co-op)*, 2008; and *Artists Indoors Holding Outdoor Drawing*, 2010—and in the work of artists who came before her, most notably in *The Critic*, c. 1963, by Shuvinai's grandmother, Pitseolak Ashoona. It is understood as a representation of the artists proffering drawings for purchase or critique. In *Three Cousins*, a family portrait so to speak, Shuvinai makes the artists identifiable by their work. Siassie Kenneally holds a drawing of a fish head, one of the many drawings in which she isolated foods used for soups or stews, while Annie Pootoogook holds a drawing she made of a pair of scissors, and Shuvinai holds a version of a drawing she made of a woman holding yet another drawing of a woman. Here Shuvinai employs the layering technique to depict an everyday subject, but at the same time she ironically plays with the commercial element of art production in Cape Dorset.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Earth Surrounded by Drawings*, 2012, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 50.8 x 66 cm, private collection. In this complexly layered work, the globe itself might be seen as presenting artworks for the viewer's consideration.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Artists Indoors Holding Outdoor Drawing*, 2010, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 50.2 x 64.8 cm, collection of Dr. Sara Diamond.



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Shuvinai in the Co-op Studio)*, 2003, ink and pencil on paper, 50.8 x 66 cm, collection of Barry Appleton.

Kinngait Studios manager William Ritchie (b. 1954) initiated a technique by suggesting studio artists use objects from everyday life in isolation to symbolize an activity. Annie Pootoogook did this often, notably in *Kijjautiik* (Scissors), 2007, and *Coleman Stove with Robin Hood Flour and Tenderflake*, 2003/4. Shuvinai experimented with this technique, though very briefly. For example, in *School Bus*, 2007, a large, orange, easily identified school bus, with the faces of its passengers clustered in the windows, dominates the image, suggesting the regular transport of children from around Cape Dorset to the local school.

Although this and other images show Shuvinai attempting the technique introduced by Ritchie, she ultimately prefers compositions that combine multiple objects, often with unusual colour combinations and in ways that diverge from representations made by other northern artists; however, underlying themes of family, community, and connection to the land are always present in her compositions. As curator Bruce Hunter writes: "Shuvinai has an intuitive sense of compositional elements, and they always rest securely in nature. Her world(s) are a floating and colour-infused metaphor for the centre of family life that is positioned on an axis in space and held in place through a galactic network of anchors and supports extending from within the larger community."³

BEYOND THE FRAME

With the support and encouragement of Kinngait Studios, Shuvinai has stretched her practice by trying new formats. *Composition (Overlooking Cape Dorset)*, 2003, in which she cleverly links multiple sheets of paper together to illustrate an aerial view of the community, was the first of such experiments for Shuvinai and the first attempt at a large-scale drawing produced in Cape Dorset. She achieved it by pinning multiple sheets of paper together to allow for an expansion of surface on which to create her vision. The use of large-format paper in Kinngait has been relatively recent, since about 2006. Shuvinai adapted quickly to the new format and has proven to be adept at large

drawings, masterfully filling the picture plane in great detail, as can be seen in *Untitled (Eden)*, 2008, and *Untitled (Yellow Amauti)*, 2010. But such works prove challenging and time-consuming given that her primary drawing material is coloured pencil.

The studio has also encouraged Shuvinai to explore a long, rectangular format, which she has employed vertically in a series of portraits. For example, *Composition (This Is My Coat of Many Colours)*, 2006, is a rare self-portrait of the artist in her favourite coat of colourful stripes, and *Priest*, 2006, is a long, vertical image of an unidentified clergyman. Other vertical images picture people she has met or seen on television, although, like the priest, they are seldom identified. These portraits occasionally make social commentary, as seen in *Carrying Suicidal People*, 2011, and *Oh My Goodness*, 2011, which respectively address the startling suicide rates in her community of Kinngait and the disturbing aftermath of Japan's 2011 tsunami. Shuvinai occasionally turns the rectangular format sideways and presents images in a horizontal manner. A wonderful example of this is seen in *In The Gallery*, 2009, in which the artist depicts a scene from an art exhibition in the South that includes her work among the others on display.⁴



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Untitled (Eden)*, 2008, coloured pencil, Fineliner pen, and graphite on wove paper, 237 x 116.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (This Is My Coat of Many Colours)*, 2006, ink and coloured pencil on paper, 101.6 x 33 cm, collection of Edward J. Guarino.

Shuvinai has also experimented with three-dimensional drawing and is urged to do so by the studio. She produced a unique pencil crayon and ink drawing *Composition (Cube)*, 2009, that forms a cube when assembled and was purchased by the Art Gallery of Ontario. Shuvinai has recently worked on three-dimensional pyramidal drawings as well.

In 2008 Brad van der Zanden, musician and manager at Feheley Fine Arts, offered to make a guitar for the gallery's long-time client and patron of Inuit art Kevin Hearn, of the band Barenaked Ladies. Hearn suggested that an artist draw on it; van der Zanden agreed and sent several guitar bodies to Kinngait Studios for artists to ornament. According to van der Zanden, "When I received the first group of six instruments back from the north we gave [Kevin] first choice and when it was completed we gifted it to him. The artists involved at

that time were Qavavau [Kavavaow Mannamee], Shuvinai, Jutai [Toonoo] and Ningekuluk [Teevee]. Shuvinai seems to have enjoyed the project most, along with Tim [Pitsiulak], and so we produced more in the subsequent years. In total I have handmade eighteen instruments featuring the artwork of various artists from Cape Dorset—six guitars, two bass guitars, and three ukuleles with artwork by Shuvinai.”⁵

Hearn selected one of the guitars with artwork by Shuvinai. Although he had met Shuvinai at Feheley Fine Arts in 2012, it was during a visit to Cape Dorset in 2014 that he again connected with the artist. In the song he dedicated to her on his recent solo album, *Walking in the Midnight Sun*, he writes, “Shuvinai went walking by the frozen sea, looking at things that were invisible to me / Creatures by the floe edge and on the ancient trail ... When she speaks to me, though I try to understand, it’s like trying to catch water in my hand.”



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Cube)*, 2009, coloured pencil and black ink on paper, 41.9 x 39.4 x 39.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Kevin Hearn's guitar with Shuvinai Ashoona's drawings, 2016, photograph by Brad van der Zanden.

PRINTMAKING

Since 1959 the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative has produced an annual print collection of between thirty and sixty images, which since 1978 have been marketed to commercial galleries and institutions through Dorset Fine Arts (DFA). Around the mid-2000s the arts and crafts sector of the co-op began to be referred to as Kinngait Studios. It is the oldest continuously running print studio in Canada and boasts some of the most talented printmaking technicians in the world.⁶ For many years art enthusiasts have been aggressively collecting studio prints, and many annual releases sell out.



Between 1997 and 2016, twenty-nine prints based on drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona were included in the Cape Dorset Annual Print Collection. Shuvinai works primarily in lithography. In stonecut printing, another common method used by artists in Cape Dorset, the printmakers redraw everything, but with lithography the artist's hand is preserved. As Kinngait Studios manager William Ritchie (b. 1954) explains, "The artist always draws the key images on plates, stones, or mylars, which is the beauty of the medium."⁷



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Handstand*, 2010, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 76 x 56 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Handstand*, 2010, stonecut and stencil, printed by Qiatsuq Niviaqsi, 86.3 x 62 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.

Relatively few prints by Shuvinai have been included in the annual collection of Cape Dorset prints, and the sale of her prints is not as robust as that of some of the other Kinngait artists. Perhaps this is because her drawings tend to be highly detailed rather than graphic or iconic, as the most successful prints are. Shuvinai often fills an entire sheet of paper with complex details that are hard to translate to stonecut or lithography. Her non-traditional subject matter is also not what collectors of Inuit prints necessarily want in their collections.

Ritchie explains, "I think there is a different market for her drawings, [these collectors] are more adventurous and not looking for stereotypes. It is funny, when people extol the virtue of the Dorset aesthetic they trot out Shuvinai as an example of the work we're doing. I love her work. I love *Scary Dream*, 2006, which I really had to fight to get included in the collection by DFA. I also really love her green egg with the tools floating inside, a beautiful lithograph and a fine example of Shu and the skill of the printer."⁸ Here Ritchie refers to *Egg*, 2006, one of the few prints by Shuvinai Ashoona included that year in the annual release of prints. A single dark-green egg is placed tip up in the centre of the page, the egg marked with repetitive tools, *uluit* (the *ulu* is a woman's knife), other knives, and axes that connect to create a pattern of industry on the surface of the egg. The tools are perhaps simply placed there to help the egg crack open and bring new life into the world.



LEFT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Scary Dream*, 2006, lithograph, 69.2 x 56.5 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. RIGHT: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Egg*, 2006, lithograph, 60.96 x 43.18 cm, Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



WHERE TO SEE

Shuvinai Ashoona's works can be found in numerous public and private collections across Canada and the United States. The most significant public collections of her work are at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. For works produced in multiple editions, the following institutions have at least one multiple in their collections. Although these institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view.



AGNES ETHERINGTON ART CENTRE

Queen's University
36 University Avenue
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
613-533-2190
agnes.queensu.ca



Shuvinai Ashoona, *People Walking Between Worlds*, 2010
Pencil crayon and ink on paper
64.8 x 49.5 cm

ART GALLERY OF GUELPH

358 Gordon Street
Guelph, Ontario, Canada
519-837-0010
artgalleryofguelph.ca



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Community with Six Houses)*, 2004-5
Coloured pencil, ink on paper
66 x 50.8 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Time Interrupted)*, 2006
Ink and coloured pencil
101.6 x 26 cm



ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

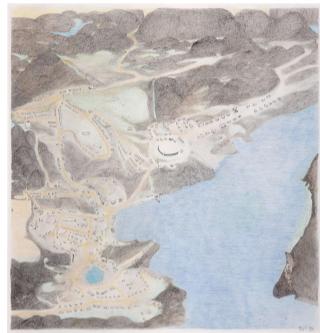
317 Dundas Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648
ago.net



**Shuvinai Ashoona,
Titanic, Nascopie, and
Noah's Ark, 2008**
Ink and coloured pencil
122 x 241 cm



**Shuvinai Ashoona,
Composition (Cube),
2009**
Coloured pencil, black
ink on paper
41.9 x 39.4 x 39.4 cm



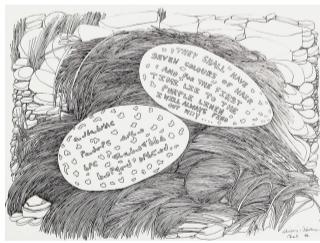
**Shuvinai Ashoona, Cape
Dorset from Above,
2012**
Coloured pencil and ink
on paper
127 x 121.9 cm



**Shuvinai Ashoona,
Shovelling Worlds,
2013**
Coloured pencil,
Fineliner pen, and
graphite on paper
127 x 127 cm

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY

100 Laurier Street
Gatineau, Quebec, Canada
1-800-555-5621 or 819-776-7000
historymuseum.ca



**Shuvinai Ashoona, Composition
(Egg in Landscape), 2006**
Fineliner pen on paper
51 x 66 cm



MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

10365 Islington Avenue
Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada
1-888-213-1121 or 905-893-1121
mcmichael.com



**Shuvinai Ashoona, *Community*,
1993-94**

Fineliner on paper
50.5 x 66 cm

MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West
Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
514-285-2000
mbam.qc.ca



**Shuvinai Ashoona, *Birthing
Scene*, 2013**

Coloured pencil and ink over
traces of graphite on paper
127 x 71 cm



**Shuvinai Ashoona, *Happy Mother*,
2013**

Coloured pencil on paper
127 x 71 cm

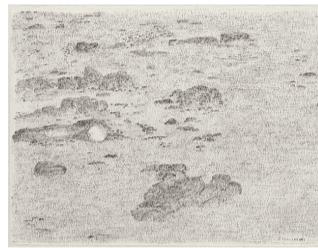


NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
1-800-319-2787 or 613-990-1985
gallery.ca



Shuvinai Ashoona, Low Tide, 1994
Fineliner pen on ivory wove paper
33 x 51.5 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, Landscape with Grass, 1996
Fineliner pen on ivory wove paper
25.5 x 33.2 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, Rock Landscape, 1998
Fineliner pen on ivory wove paper
66 x 50.8 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, Rock Landscape, 1998
Fineliner on ivory wove paper
33 x 25.5 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona and John Noestheden, Earth and Sky, 2008
Pen and black ink, coloured pencil, graphite, collage, and adhered glass crystals on wove paper
34.3 x 485 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, Untitled (Eden), 2008
Coloured pencil, Fineliner pen, and graphite on wove paper
237 x 116.5 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, Untitled (Pink Amauti Hood), 2010
Coloured pencil and Fineliner pen on wove paper
Overall:
246.5 x 124.8 cm;
image: 236 x 114.4 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, All Kinds of Spiders in Different Views, 2011
Fineliner pen over graphite on wove paper
Overall: 83 x 125 cm;
image: 72.7 x 114.5 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Oh My Goodness*, 2011
Coloured pencil and Fineliner pen on wove paper
Approx. 21 x 25.5 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Holding Shirts*, 2015
Ink and coloured pencil on paper
62.5 x 233 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle, *InaGodadavida*, 2015
Ink and coloured pencil on paper
123 x 218 cm

OAKVILLE GALLERIES

120 Navy Street
Oakville, Ontario, Canada
905-844-4402
oakvillegalleries.com



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Summer Sealift*, 2004
Lithograph on paper
56.5 x 76.3 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Hunting Monster*, 2015
Ink and coloured pencil on paper
123 x 162.5 cm



WINNIPEG ART GALLERY

300 Memorial Boulevard
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
204-789-1760
wag.ca



Shuvinai Ashoona,
Family in Tent, 2003
Fineliner pen on paper
51 x 66.5 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona,
Egg and Tools, 2004-5
Ink and coloured pencil
on paper
51.2 x 66 cm



Shuvinai Ashoona,
Sinking Titanic, 2012
Graphite, coloured
pencil, and Fineliner
pen on paper
124.5 x 122 cm



NOTES

BIOGRAPHY

1. Inuit adoption customs are complex and intrinsically linked to Inuit culture and kinship systems, ultimately lending resilience to communities. For an overview see <https://www.bcadoption.com/resources/articles/perspectives-inuit-custom-adoption>.
2. Shuvinai Ashoona in conversation with the author, n.d. While working at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto (2003-6), the author was introduced to the drawings of emerging artists Annie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona, two among the many Kinngait Studios artists such as Kananginak Pootoogook, Ohotaq Mikkigak, Kenojuak Ashevak, Papiara Tukiki, and Mayoreak Ashoona. Much of the research on Shuvinai Ashoona presented in this book is the result of more than ten years of tracking the development of drawing in Nunavut and of extensive interviews and correspondence with Shuvinai and other artists and cultural workers at Kinngait Studios (the "art" arm of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative), as well as the author's curation of numerous exhibitions of Inuit artists from this community through a contemporary curatorial lens.
3. Ancestors of the modern Inuit have lived in the region of what is today Nunavut for four thousand years. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that whalers and missionaries began to visit Kinngait (Cape Dorset, on Dorset Island). Dorset Island is a part of the Foxe Peninsula and lies in close proximity to the southwest shore of Baffin Island. The Foxe Peninsula was named by the British in 1631 after Captain Luke Foxe, an explorer in search of the Northwest Passage. Cape Dorset was named after one of Foxe's financial sponsors, Edward Sackville, earl of Dorset. The island is beautiful, with rolling hills and a 243-metre-high mountain, or "cape," that is part of the Kinngait range. "Kinngait" means "high mountain" in Inuktitut (see http://www.capedorset.ca/en/tourism_town_history.asp). In 1913 the Hudson's Bay Company set up a trading post in Cape Dorset, and small Inuit outpost camps slowly began to grow around it because of the lure of the southern goods that were being distributed. Between 1938 and 1953, Anglican and Roman Catholic missions were constructed in Kinngait, along with a school and a number of permanent homes. The modern period, understood as the period after 1948 until 2000, marks the beginning of the Canadian government's efforts to move Inuit people from life in small nomadic groups of up to about thirty people consisting of families to permanent settlement in communities such as Kinngait.
4. See Sandra Dyck, *Shuvinai Ashoona: Drawings* (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 2012), 18-19.
5. Mary Ashoona in conversation with the author, October 2015.



6. Dr. Allison Crawford in email correspondence, November 11, 2015. Dr. Crawford is the director of the Northern Psychiatric Outreach Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto. She focuses on engaging northern communities in mental health and well-being treatments that are culturally appropriate and on educating healthcare providers from the South about Inuit culture.

7. Dr. Allison Crawford in email correspondence, November 11, 2015.

8. Perhaps most famous for its arts and crafts sector, the co-op also provides its community with gas, groceries, and other items for sale. Established in the 1950s, the co-op's artist studio has been referred to as Kinngait Studios since the mid-2000s.

9. Although there are exceptions, women tend to use the drawing studios, while men typically print and carve.

10. The "South" refers to the provinces in Canada, as opposed to the northern territories.

11. Dyck, *Shuvinai Ashoona*, 35.

12. Dyck, *Shuvinai Ashoona*, 35.

13. Emily Falvey, "When Politics and Imagination Mix," *Canadian Art*, spring 2016, <https://canadianart.ca/reviews/shuvinai-ashoona-and-shary-boyle-mix-imagination-and-politics/>.

14. Meeka Walsh in Craig Garret, ed., *Vitamin D2: New Perspectives in Drawing* (London: Phaidon Press, 2013), 32.

KEY WORKS: DISCOMBOBULATED WOMAN

1. The "South" refers to the provinces in Canada, as opposed to the northern territories.

KEY WORKS: COMPOSITION (COMMUNITY WITH SIX HOUSES)

1. See Sandra Dyck, *Shuvinai Ashoona: Drawings* (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 2012), 26: "Supply ships brought pre-fab matchbox houses to Cape Dorset in the early 1960s ... [the houses were] constructed for relocation in the settlement period. Often these were one room houses without electricity or water."

2. Shuvinai Ashoona in conversation with the author, n.d.

KEY WORKS: FAMILY IN TENT

1. While working at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto (2003-6), the author was introduced to the drawings of emerging artists Annie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona, two among the many Kinngait Studios artists such as Kananginak Pootoogook, Ohotaq Mikkigak, Kenojuak Ashevak, Papiara Tukiki, and Mayoreak Ashoona. Thus much of the research on Shuvinai Ashoona presented in this book is the result of more than ten years of tracking



the development of drawing in Nunavut and of extensive interviews and correspondence with Shuvinai and other artists and cultural workers at the Kinngait Studios (the "art" arm of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative), as well as the author's curation of numerous exhibitions of Inuit artists from this community through a contemporary curatorial lens.

KEY WORKS: COMPOSITION (EGG IN LANDSCAPE)

1. Translation by Joemie Tapaungai in email correspondence, November 25, 2015.

2. See <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/brief-guide-beat-poets>.

KEY WORKS: COMPOSITION (PEOPLE, ANIMALS, AND THE WORLD HOLDING HANDS)

1. Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* is a body of knowledge and unique cultural insights of Inuit into the workings of nature, humans, and animals. See www.naho.ca/inuit/inuit-knowledge/inuit-traditional-knowledge/.

2. Shuvinai Ashoona in conversation with the author, May 15, 2015.

3. John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: The Complete Edition* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014; originally published in 1932), 121.

4. Edward J. Guarino in email correspondence, October 30, 2015.

KEY WORKS: COMPOSITION (TWO MEN AND A SPIDER)

1. Shuvinai Ashoona in conversation with the author, May 11, 2015.

2. Shary Boyle, "Shuvinai Ashoona," *Canadian Art* (fall 2009): 176.

KEY WORKS: EARTH AND SKY

1. Wayne Baerwaldt in email correspondence, November 16, 2015.

KEY WORKS: OH MY GOODNESS

1. William Ritchie in email correspondence, November 25, 2015. Joemie Tapaungai, a buyer at Kinngait Studios, provided the translation of the Inuktitut syllabics featured in the work.

2. Laura Eggertson, "Nunavut Should Declare State of Emergency Over Suicide Crisis," CBC News online, September 27, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-suicide-1.3245844>.

KEY WORKS: EARTH TRANSFORMATIONS

1. Bruce Hunter, *Shuvinai's World(s): Drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona* (Toronto: Feheley Fine Arts, 2012), 6. Exhibition brochure.

2. William Ritchie in email correspondence, July 16, 2016.

KEY WORKS: HAPPY MOTHER

1. Shuvinai Ashoona in email correspondence, January 8, 2016.



2. Beverley O'Brien, ed., *Birth on the Land: Memories of the Inuit Elders and Traditional Midwives* (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2012).

KEY WORKS: COMPOSITION (HANDS DRAWING)

1. Shuviani Ashoona in conversation with the author, May 18, 2015, in Cape Dorset.

KEY WORKS: COMPOSITION (ATTACK OF THE TENTACLE MONSTERS)

1. Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle first exhibited together in *Noise Ghost*, 2009. Held at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, at the University of Toronto, this landmark exhibition sought to present artists from the North and South on equal footing.

2. Shary Boyle in email correspondence, November 23, 2015.

SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. The "South" refers to the provinces in Canada, as opposed to the northern territories.

2. Jennifer Aslop, "History of Cape Dorset and the West Baffin Co-operative," *The Co-operative Learning Centre*, May 1, 2010,
[http://www.learningcentre.coop/resource/
history-cape-dorset-and-west-baffin-co-operative#operations](http://www.learningcentre.coop/resource/history-cape-dorset-and-west-baffin-co-operative#operations).

3. William Ritchie in email correspondence, September 12, 2016.

4. For more information on the *Nascopie*, see
[www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/history/
transportation/nascopie/home](http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/history/transportation/nascopie/home).

5. See Claire Smith and H. Martin Wobst, eds, *Indigenous Archaeologies: Decolonising Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

6. Heather Igloliorte, *Decolonize Me* (Ottawa: Ottawa Art Gallery, 2012).

7. Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* is a body of knowledge and unique cultural insights of Inuit into the workings of nature, humans, and animals. See
www.naho.ca/inuit/inuit-knowledge/inuit-traditional-knowledge/.

8. Shuvinai Ashoona in conversation with the author, n.d. While working at The Power Plant Art Gallery in Toronto (2003-6), the author was introduced to the drawings of emerging artists Annie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona, two among the many Kinngait Studios artists such as Kananginak Pootoogook, Ohotaq Mikkigak, Kenojuak Ashevak, Papiara Tukiki, and Mayoreak Ashoona. Thus much of the research on Shuvinai Ashoona presented in this book is the result of more than ten years of tracking the development of drawing in Nunavut and of extensive interviews and correspondence with Shuvinai and other artists and cultural workers at the Kinngait Studios (the "art" arm of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative), as well as the author's curation of numerous exhibitions of Inuit artists from this community through a contemporary curatorial lens.



9. Meeka Walsh in Craig Garret, ed., *Vitamin D2: New Perspectives in Drawing* (London: Phaidon Press, 2013), 32-33.

10. Shuvinai Ashoona in conversation with the author, n.d.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. While working at The Power Plant Art Gallery in Toronto (2003-6), the author was introduced to the drawings of emerging artists Annie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona, two among the many Kinngait Studios artists such as Kananginak Pootoogook, Ohotaq Mikkigak, Kenojuak Ashevak, Papiara Tukiki, and Mayoreak Ashoona. Thus much of the research on Shuvinai Ashoona presented in this book is the result of more than ten years of tracking the development of drawing in Nunavut and of extensive interviews and correspondence with Shuvinai and other artists and cultural workers at the Kinngait Studios (the "art" arm of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative), as well as the author's curation of numerous exhibitions of Inuit artists from this community through a contemporary curatorial lens.

2. Translation by Joemie Tapaungai in email correspondence, November 25, 2015.

3. Bruce Hunter, *Shuvinai's World(s): Drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona* (Toronto: Feheley Fine Arts, 2012) Exhibition brochure.

4. The "South" refers to the provinces in Canada, as opposed to the northern territories.

5. Brad van der Zanden in email correspondence, August 18, 2016.

6. See <http://www.dorsetfinearts.com/printmaking> for detailed descriptions of the printmaking processes.

7. William Ritchie in email correspondence, February 23, 2016.

8. William Ritchie in email correspondence, February 23, 2016.



GLOSSARY

Akesuk, Saimaiyu (Kinngait, b. 1988)

An artist known for her bold drawings, Saimaiyu Akesuk often represents bears and birds in her work. Prints based on her drawings have been released in Kinngait Studios' Annual Print Collection, including in 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Ashevak, Arnaqu (Kinngait, 1956–2009)

Most widely known for his carvings, Arnaqu Ashevak was also a printmaker and graphic artist. He was an adopted son of famed first-generation Inuit artist Kenojuak Ashevak and engraver and carver Johniebo Ashevak.

Ashevak, Kenojuak (Ikirasak/Kinngait, 1927–2013)

Born on southern Baffin Island, this graphic artist largely represented Inuit art in Canada and internationally from the 1960s onward. The recipient of numerous commissions from federal and public institutions, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Canada Post, and VIA Rail, her captivating images of animal and human figures are among the most recognizable in Canadian art history.

Ashoona, Goota (Kinngait, b. 1967)

A third-generation artist from Cape Dorset, Goota Ashoona is a carver of traditional Inuit whalebone and stone sculptures. In 2008 the family studio held the exhibition *The Gift from Haida Gwaii*, which included a two-metre-high piece collaboratively carved from a single whale's rib.

Ashoona, Kiugak (Kinngait, 1933–2014)

A master carver of traditional Inuit sculpture, Kiugak Ashoona received the Order of Canada in 2000 and is among the most significant figures in contemporary northern art. A second-generation Inuit artist, he was one of Pitseolak Ashoona's sons. A retrospective exhibition of his decades-long career was held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2010.

Ashoona, Mayoreak (Ashoona, Mayureak) (Saturituk/Kinngait, b. 1946)

A graphic artist and master carver whose mother was the pioneering graphic artist Sheouak Parr. After the death of her husband, the carver Qaqaq Ashoona, Mayoreak Ashoona moved from their camp on southern Baffin Island to Cape Dorset. Her work has been exhibited in Germany and Japan, as well as across Canada.

Ashoona, Napachie (Kinngait, b. 1974)

A carver from Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island, Napachie Ashoona is the son of the artists Sorosilutu and Kiugak Ashoona. His figurative sculptures are carved from serpentine, a stone indigenous to Baffin Island, and explore movement and traditional themes, including hunting, drum dancing, and familial bonds.

Ashoona, Ohito (Kinngait, b. 1952)

An acclaimed carver and expert hunter from Cape Dorset, Ohito Ashoona is the son of Qaqaq Ashoona. He learned his art form at age twelve and in 2002 was awarded a National Aboriginal Achievement Award for his accomplishments in the visual arts.



Ashoona, Pitseolak (Tujakjuak/Kinngait, c. 1904–1983)

A major figure in the history of Cape Dorset graphic art, Pitseolak Ashoona made well over eight thousand drawings during her twenty-five-year career. Beginning in 1960, her enormously popular, frequently autobiographical images were included in the Cape Dorset Annual Print Collection yearly. She bore seventeen children, and many became significant artists in their own right. (See *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work* by Christine Lalonde.)

Ashoona, Sorosilutu (Kinngait, b. 1941)

A prominent Cape Dorset artist who was encouraged as a young woman by her mother-in-law, Pitseolak Ashoona. Early on, Sorosilutu Ashoona was drawn to the colours that could be achieved through printmaking techniques. Her lithographs, stonecuts, and stencils often refer to Inuit stories familiar from her youth.

Boyle, Shary (Canadian, b. 1972)

A leading contemporary artist with a politically and personally oriented practice that incorporates drawing, sculpture, painting, and performance. She works independently and collaboratively: past collaborations include *Universal Cobra*, 2015, with Shuvinai Ashoona and *Illuminations Project*, 2005–15, with Emily Duke. Boyle represented Canada at the Venice Biennale in 2013.

Cape Dorset Annual Print Collection

Established in 1959, this is the annual release of prints created by artists in the printmaking section of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (now Kinngait Studios). Prints have been distributed in the art market of the South by Dorset Fine Arts, which markets Inuit art to galleries and institutions.

Dorset Fine Arts

The wholesale marketing division of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (now Kinngait Studios), based in Toronto. Established in 1978, Dorset Fine Arts makes available to an international market Inuit sculptures, drawings, and prints.

Kenneally, Siassie (Iqalugajuk/Kinngait, b. 1969)

A member of an unusually artistic Cape Dorset family that includes her father, the carver Kaka Ashoona, and her grandmother, the widely admired Pitseolak Ashoona. Siassie Kenneally began drawing at Kinngait Studios (formerly the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative) in 2004. She often draws on a large scale, depicting traditional Inuit lifestyles in a contemporary manner.

Kinngait Studios

Since the mid-2000s, the arts and crafts sector of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative of Cape Dorset (Kinngait), Nunavut, has also been referred to as Kinngait Studios. The studio includes artist co-op members who carve, draw, and make prints.

lithograph

A type of print invented in 1798 in Germany by Alois Senefelder. Like other planographic methods of image reproduction, lithography relies on the fact



that grease and water do not mix. Placed in a press, the moistened and inked lithographic stone will print only those areas previously designed with greasy lithographic ink.

Manumie, Qavavau (Mannomie, Kavavaow) (Brandon/Kinngait, b. 1958)

Qavavau Manumie began his artistic career as a skilled printmaker for the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (now Kinngait Studios), translating other artists' drawings into prints for publication. He later began concentrating more on his own compositions: imaginative and personal drawings in ink and coloured pencil that can have a surreal quality.

Myre, Nadia (Algonquin, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, b. 1974)

A multidisciplinary artist and member of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, Myre explores issues of identity, language, loss, and desire in her practice. Her work often involves the participation of others, such as in her ongoing *Scar Project* (begun in 2004), which asks viewers to express their "wounds" through specific creative processes. Myre won the prestigious Sobey Art Award in 2014.

negative space

An unoccupied pictorial space between and around the subjects of an image. Negative space is sometimes used to also create pertinent shapes within a work.

Noestheden, John (Canadian, b. 1945)

An artist and teacher whose rigorous conceptual works—paintings, drawings, installations, sculptures, and mixed media—evoke his interests in beauty, formal simplicity, and process. Widely exhibited and collected, his work is held by public institutions across Canada, including the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Glenbow Museum, Calgary; and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Packer, Allan (Canadian, b. 1956)

Born in Windsor, Ontario, Packer travelled to Cape Dorset in 1980 to help develop the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (now Kinngait Studios). His experiences there would have a profound influence on his later artistic development. Now resident in Seattle, Washington, Packer creates cast sculptures, often informed by his abiding interest in mathematics.

Pitsiulak, Tim (Kimmirut/Kinngait, 1967–2016)

A prominent member of the artistic community of Cape Dorset. His meticulous prints, drawings, sculptures, and jewellery convey the natural environment and everyday life. His work is held by numerous public institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Art Gallery of Winnipeg; and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Pootoogook, Annie (Kinngait, 1969–2016)

One of Canada's most prominent Inuit artists, whose non-traditional and very personal drawings and prints convey her experience of present-day life in Cape Dorset. Her extraordinarily artistic family includes her parents, Eegyvadluq and Napachie Pootoogook, and her grandmother Pitseolak Ashoona. In 2006



Annie Pootoogook won the prestigious Sobey Art Award and in 2007 was exhibited in Germany at Documenta 12.

Pootoogook, Cee (Kinngait, b. 1967)

A carver since about 1990, Cee Pootoogook turned to drawing and stonecut printmaking in 2009. His work depicts both contemporary and traditional subjects: scenes of daily Cape Dorset life as well as Arctic wildlife and Inuit spirits. A third-generation artist, he is the brother of Annie Pootoogook and is Shuvinai Ashoona's first cousin.

Pootoogook, Napachie (Kinngait, 1938–2002)

Napachie Pootoogook was born in Sako, a camp on the southwest coast of Baffin Island, and took up drawing in the late 1950s alongside her mother, Pitseolak Ashoona. While her earliest prints and drawings largely depict the Inuit spirit world, from the 1970s she concentrated on more earth-bound subjects, including historical events and traditional life and customs.

Pudlat, Pudlo (Ilupirulik/Kinngait, 1916–1992)

A prolific first-generation Inuit artist who began his career in the 1950s, drawing with a lead pencil. As his career progressed, he adopted other media, including felt-tip pen and coloured pencil, and his iconography included imagined scenes, animals, and airplanes. His work is known to be imbued with the artist's unique sense of humour.

Ritchie, William (Canadian, b. 1954)

Born in Windsor, Ontario, Ritchie has spent most of his life in small communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Primarily a printmaker working in various techniques, Ritchie also works in watercolour and acrylic paint, film, and digital media. His work often depicts the landscapes and animals that have fascinated him for many years. He is also the manager of Cape Dorset's Kinngait Studios (formerly the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative).

Ryan, Terrence (Canadian, 1933–2017)

A Toronto artist who settled in Cape Dorset in 1960, where for nearly fifty years he managed and then directed what is now Kinngait Studios, the most prosperous printmaking centre in Canadian history. Ryan received the Order of Canada in 1983 and a Governor General's Award in 2010 for his support of the visual arts in northern Canada.

stonecut

A variation on the woodcut, which uses stone rather than a block of wood to create a relief print. Stonecut printmaking originated with Inuit artists and remains largely unique to Canada's north.

Surrealism

An early twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that began in Paris. Surrealism aimed to express the workings of the unconscious, free of convention and reason, and was characterized by fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions. The movement spread globally, influencing film, theatre, and music.



Teevee, Ningiukulu (Ningeokuluk) (Kinngait, b. 1963)

A leading graphic artist, author, and illustrator from Cape Dorset. She first contributed to the Cape Dorset Annual Print Collection in 2004, and her critical and public recognition has risen steadily since. Her stylistically varied oeuvre includes formal experiments, particularly with pattern, and reveals an interest in the relationship between representation and abstraction.

West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (Kinngait Studios)

Established in 1960 as a formalized organization for the Inuit co-operatives that had been operating in the eastern Arctic since the 1950s, the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative is an artists' co-operative that houses a print shop. It markets and sells Inuit carvings and prints, in particular through its affiliate in the South, Dorset Fine Arts. Since approximately 2006 the arts and crafts sector of the co-op has been referred to as Kinngait Studios.

Western Front, Vancouver

A Vancouver artist-run centre founded by eight artists in 1973. A locus of innovative artistic activity throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it played a key role in the development of interdisciplinary, ephemeral, media-based, performance, and electronic art. It remains an important centre for contemporary art and music.

Willard, Tania (Secwepemc, b. 1977)

An artist and curator, and an increasingly important figure in Canadian arts and culture. A member of Secwepemc Nation, Willard's community-engaged practice often explores the common ground between Aboriginal and other cultures. Her exhibition *Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture* toured nationally after opening at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2011.



SOURCES & RESOURCES

Shuvinai Ashoona is one of the first Inuit artists to exhibit as a contemporary artist, both in Canada and internationally. She has also collaborated with a number of other contemporary Canadian artists, producing joint works and exhibitions. Her work has been subject to critical discussions in books, articles, and exhibition catalogues, and a documentary film features her work.



KEY EXHIBITIONS

Shuvinai Ashoona's drawings and prints have been included in national and international contemporary art exhibitions, solidifying her reputation as a contemporary artist and breaking barriers that have ghettoized Inuit artists in the past.



Installation view of *Woven Thoughts* at Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto, September 2014, photograph by Renzo Fernandez.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2006 November 4-25, 2006, *Shuvinai Ashoona: Time Interrupted*, Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.

2007 October 13-November 27, 2007, *Shuvinai Ashoona: Drawings 1993-2007*, Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver.

2009 April 27-June 14, 2009, *Shuvinai Ashoona Drawings*, Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa. Catalogue.

2012 September 15-October 10, 2012, *Shuvinai's World(s)*, Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.

2014 September 20-October 11, 2014, *Shuvinai Ashoona: Woven Thoughts*, Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.



GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1999 May 14-August 31, 1999, *Three Women, Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, Napatchie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario. Catalogue.

2006 May 4-June 18, 2006, *Landscape: Contemporary Inuit Drawings*, Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver. Catalogue.

2006-07 February 2006-March 2007, *Ashoona: Third Wave, New Drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona, Siassie Kenneally and Annie Pootoogook*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton.

2007 June 2-July 28, 2007, *3 Cousins: Original Drawings by Annie Pootoogook, Shuvinai Ashoona and Siassie Kenneally*, Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.

2008 September 20-October 11, 2008, *Stadthimmel ("Citysky"): Shuvinai Ashoona and John Noestheden*, Basel, Switzerland.

2009 May 28-August 23, 2009, *Noise Ghost: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto. Catalogue.

July 11-August 29, 2009, *Contemporary Traditions: Shuvinai Ashoona and Annie Pootoogook*, Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.

July 18-August 30, 2009, *Extreme Drawing*, Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver.

2009-10 October 10, 2009-January 17, 2010, *Nunannguaq: In the Likeness of the Earth*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario.

October 16, 2009-January 17, 2010, *Uuturautiit: Cape Dorset Celebrates 50 Years of Printmaking*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

2010 February 5-May 8, 2010, *Monster*, West Vancouver Museum.

July 17-August 7, 2010, *The Drawing Room*, Pendulum Gallery, West Vancouver.

2010-11 November 5, 2010-January 23, 2011, *It Is What It Is: Recent Acquisitions of New Canadian Art*, Canadian Biennial, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

2011 April 2-August 21, 2011, *Inuit Modern: The Samuel and Esther Sarick Collection*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Catalogue.

October 14-November 20, 2011, *Surreal: Eight Artists in the Fantastical Tradition*, Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver.



2012 February 10-March 18, 2012, *Sky Ecchymosis*, Women of the Arctic series, La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, Montreal.

February 24-March 24, 2012, *Dorset Now*, Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.

March 22-May 19, 2012, *Sleep of Reason*, Yukon Arts Centre, Whitehorse, Yukon.

June 27-September 16, 2012, *John Noestheden: Sky and Shuvinai Ashoona: Earth*, 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia.

2012-13 May 26, 2012-April 1, 2013, *Oh, Canada: Contemporary Art from North North America*, organized by the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), North Adams, Massachusetts. Tour; catalogue.

2013 May 17-September 2, 2013, *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Catalogue.

June 29-September 2, 2013, *Takujaksait (Something to See)*, Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum, Iqaluit.

2014-15 July 20, 2014-January 11, 2015, *Unsettled Landscapes: SITElines: New Perspectives on Art of the Americas*, SITE Santa Fe. Catalogue.

October 17, 2014-March 8, 2015, *Shine a Light: Canadian Biennial 2014*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

2015 November 7-December 19, 2015, *Universal Cobra: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*, Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal, with Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Shuvinai Ashoona has been a regular contributor to the annual release of Cape Dorset prints, which is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. She was a contributor to the 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, and 2015 collections. The first drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona that came through Dorset Fine Arts date to 1993. Dorset Fine Arts is the marketing division for Kinngait Studios at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative.



CRITICAL TEXTS

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Campbell, Nancy. *Noise Ghost and Other Stories*. Toronto: Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto, 2016. Exhibition catalogue.

De Zegher, Catherine, and Gerald McMaster, eds. *All Our Relations: 18th Biennale of Sydney*. Sydney: Biennale of Sydney Limited, 2012.

Dyck, Sandra. *Shuvinai Ashoona: Drawings*. Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 2012. Exhibition catalogue.

Hill, Greg, Candice Hopkins, and Christine Lalonde. *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013. Exhibition catalogue.

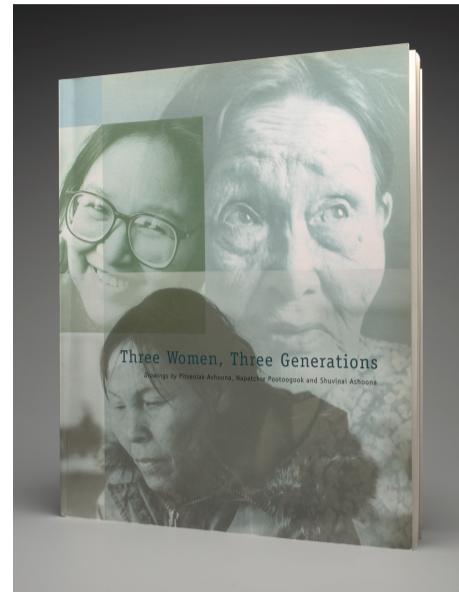
Kardosh, Robert. "The New Generation: A Radical Defiance." *Inuit Art Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (winter 2008): 20-30.

Karlinsky, Amy. Portfolio: "Land of the Midnight Sons and Daughters: Contemporary Inuit Drawings: Shuvinai Ashoona, Kavavaow Manomee, Nick Sikuark." *Border Crossings* 105 (February 2008).

McMaster, Gerald, ed. *Inuit Modern: The Samuel and Esther Sarick Collection*. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2011.

Sinclair, James. "Breaking New Ground: The Graphic Work of Shuvinai Ashoona, Janet Kigusiuq, Victoria Mamanguqsualuk, and Annie Pootoogook." *Inuit Art Quarterly* 19, nos. 3 and 4 (fall/winter 2004): 58-61.

Wight, Darlene Coward, ed. *Creation and Transformation: Defining Moments in Inuit Art*. Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery; Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012.

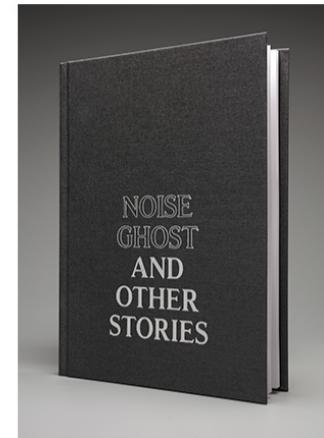
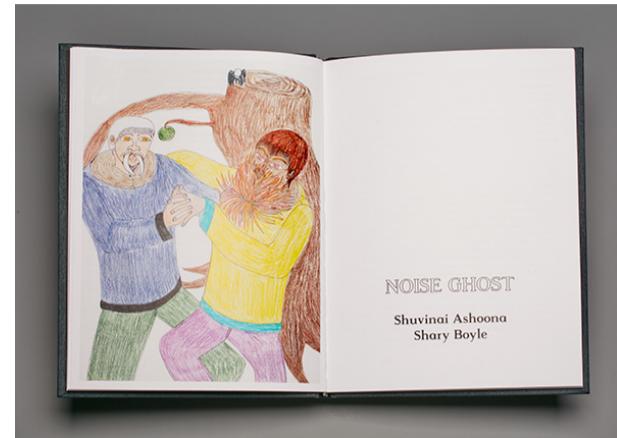


Cover of the catalogue for *Three Women, Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, Napatchie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, 1999, photograph by Ian Lefebvre.



FURTHER READING

Until the early 1990s most scholarship on Inuit art focused on sculpture and prints. The rise of the drawing culture in the North, centred in the community of Kinngait (Cape Dorset), has not been explored in depth. Ingo Hessel's *Inuit Art: An Introduction* (1998) provides an intelligent overview of Inuit art and a straightforward examination of the developments in different communities since the late 1940s but makes little mention of drawing. Leslie Boyd Ryan's *Cape Dorset Prints: A Retrospective; Fifty Years of Printmaking at the Kinngait Studios* (2007) traces the development of print production in Kinngait Studios. *Inuit Art Quarterly* (IAQ), a journal produced by the Inuit Art Foundation since 1985, publishes new scholarship in the field and provides a timeline of trends in Inuit art practice, often featuring articles on the artists of Cape Dorset.



LEFT: Interior spread of *Noise Ghost and Other Stories* (2016), a catalogue documenting three exhibits at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House (now the Art Museum at the University of Toronto), including *Noise Ghost: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle*, 2009, photograph by Sean Weaver. RIGHT: Cover of *Noise Ghost and Other Stories* (2016), photograph by Ian Lefebvre.

Inuit Art Quarterly (IAQ), a journal produced by the Inuit Art Foundation since 1985, publishes new scholarship in the field and provides a timeline of trends in Inuit art practice, often featuring articles on the artists of Cape Dorset.

Many university presses, most notably McGill-Queen's University Press and the University of Manitoba Press, publish on a wide range of artistic practice in the North. Exhibition catalogues on other significant graphic artists from the Kinngait community have been published, including catalogues on Annie Pootoogook, Napachie Pootoogook, Pitseolak Ashoona, Pitaloosie Saila, Kananginak Pootoogook, Parr, and Pudlo Pudlat; these focus on their drawings in isolation from other artistic production, both in Kinngait and beyond.

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Cotter, Holland. "Asking Serious Questions in a Very Quiet Voice." *New York Times*, June 22, 2007.

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Maire, Aurélie. "Dessiner, c'est parler : Pratiques figuratives, représentations symboliques et enjeux socio-culturels des arts graphiques inuit au Nunavut (Arctique canadien)." PhD diss., Université Laval and Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, 2015.

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Nasby, Judith, and Marion E. Jackson. *Contemporary Inuit Drawings*. Guelph, ON: Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, 1987. Exhibition catalogue.

Stern, Pamela, and Lisa Stevenson, eds. *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.

INTERVIEWS AND FILM

Balzer, David. "Shuvinai Ashoona: 'I Don't Think from Newspaper.'" *The Believer* (November/December 2011). This interview by Canadian Art magazine editor David Balzer incorporates the artist's voice in an insightful and expansive manner, offering rare insights into the thought process of this remarkable artist. Here is an excerpt.

Ghost Noise. Directed and produced by Marcia Connolly. Siteline Media, 2010. English and Inuktitut with English subtitles.

Colour / black and white. HDcam, 23 min. <https://www.idfa.nl/industry/tags/project.aspx?id=38f02b44-b13b-43bc-a3cf-01388a8a065c>. Marcia Connolly's film explores the sources of Shuvinai Ashoona's drawings, with their images of everyday life in the Canadian Arctic infused with mythic symbolism. Connolly offers insights into what it is like to work in a remote community and at a co-operative like Kinngait Studios. We discover what it means to Shuvinai to be an artist and how the source of her art in traditional Inuit culture is shot through with Western modernity. "I want to speak in Inuktitut," says the artist, "but I always slip into English. Changing directions, that's how I am."

The etymologist Bill Casselman writes: "A Noise Ghost is an Inuit poltergeist, an arctic auditory phenomenon of incorporeal guile. This unseen, unbodied noise ghost may announce his haunting visitation by curling around a northern house on a cold quiet night and emitting a small, high-pitched hissing."



Still from the film *Ghost Noise* (2010) directed by Marcia Connolly, at 9:32.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NANCY G. CAMPBELL

Dr. Nancy G. Campbell has been an independent curator and writer on contemporary and Inuit art since 1993. Dr. Campbell is currently a guest curator at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. She was curator at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre (now the Art Gallery of Guelph), University of Guelph; director of the Doris McCarthy Gallery, University of Toronto Scarborough; adjunct curator at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto; and curator of special projects at the Art Gallery of Ontario. From 2014 to 2015 she served as the editor of the *Inuit Art Quarterly*.

Her interest in Inuit art dates back to her childhood in Winnipeg, visiting the Winnipeg Art Gallery, which houses the world's largest collection of Inuit art. In 1994 she had the opportunity to travel to Baker Lake (Qamani'tuaq) for the opening of the first major survey of Baker Lake drawings, organized by the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre. This exhibition captured Campbell's imagination, and she began to include Inuit art in her curatorial practice. Her current research focuses on contemporary Inuit drawing.

She has produced numerous exhibitions, most recently a three-part series of exhibitions at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto, that connected Inuit art with the Canadian contemporary mainstream: *Noise Ghost: Shary Boyle and Shuvinai Ashoona* (2009), *Scream: Ed Pien and Samonie Toonoo* (2010), and *Blue Cloud: Jack Bush and Ohotaq Mikkigak* (2012), as well as the landmark *Annie Pootoogook* at The Power Plant in 2006.

Campbell holds a master of arts from the University of British Columbia in arts education and a doctorate from York University in art history. Her dissertation analyzed the drawings of third-generation Inuit artists Annie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona.



"Shuvinai Ashoona is a pearl in the tiny hamlet of Cape Dorset—an artist protected from the world at large who relishes the daily routine and support offered by Kinngait Studios. In my visits to this community over the years, I have had the rare opportunity to spend time with Shuvinai, sometimes in conversation but often just watching her draw. She is a smiling face at the airport, a wake-up knock at my door in the morning with the reminder to get working, and a regular lunch companion."



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the Author

Many people have been instrumental in the writing of this publication. I acknowledge the professionalism of the entire team at the Art Canada Institute, especially Sara Angel, Meg Taylor, and Kendra Ward, for the opportunity to share the spectacular work of Shuvinai Ashoona with a broader public. I thank York University's Visual Art & Art History Department and my doctorate advisors Dr. Anna Hudson, Dr. Sarah Parsons, and Dr. Gerald McMaster, who are critical to my presentation. Special thanks to Patricia Feheley and Brad van der Zanden at Feheley Fine Arts for their knowledge, assistance, and encouragement. The people at Dorset Fine Arts have been an invaluable resource as well as my colleagues at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in Kinngait. A special thanks to William Ritchie for his valuable insight and deep experience and William Huffman for his encouragement. I respect my many colleagues at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, and The Power Plant, who have offered me many opportunities to present the work of Inuit artists within their galleries. Most importantly is Shuvinai Ashoona, for her honesty and friendship. Artists are the core, the reason, and the joy of all curatorial work.

From the Art Canada Institute

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Shuvinai Ashoona, *Happy Mother*, 2013. (See below for details.)



Credit for Banner Images



Biography: Photograph of Shuvinai Ashoona, c. March 2, 2005. Photograph by William Ritchie.



Key Works: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Attack of the Tentacle Monsters)*, 2015. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Composition (Mother and Child Sedna)*, 2012. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Shuvinai Ashoona, *To the Print Shop*, 2013. (See below for details.)



Where to See: Installation view of *Universal Cobra*, 2015, with *InaGodadavida* on the right. Photograph by Paul Litherland. (See below for details.)

Credits for Works by Shuvinai Ashoona



All Kinds of Spiders in Different Views, 2011. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchase 2011 (no. 43460). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Arctic Evening, 2003. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections (03-29). Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts.



SHUVINAI ASHOONA

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Artists Indoors Holding Outdoor Drawing, 2010. Collection of Dr. Sara Diamond. Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts.



Audience, 2014. Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Birth Scene, 2013. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchased with the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program and the Museum Campaign 1988-1993 Fund, 2014 (2014.98). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. Photo credit: Christine Guest.



Cape Dorset from Above, 2012. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with the assistance of the Joan Chalmers Inuit Art Fund, 2014 (2014/388). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Carrying Suicidal People, 2011. Collection of John and Joyce Price. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Community, 1993-94. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto (CD.148.12). Courtesy of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg. © Dorset Fine Arts.

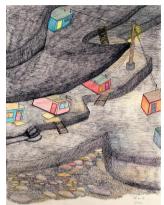


Composition (Attack of the Tentacle Monsters), 2015. Collection of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



SHUVINAI ASHOONA

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Composition (Community with Six Houses), 2004-5. Art Gallery of Guelph. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Cube), 2009. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with the assistance of the Joan Chalmers Inuit Art Purchase Fund, 2009 (2009/92). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Egg in Landscape), 2006. Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Hands Drawing), 2014. Collection of Martha Burns and Paul Gross. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Holding Up the Globe), 2014. Collection of BMO Financial Group. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Mother and Child Sedna), 2012. Collection of Dr. C. Peter N. Watson. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Overlooking Cape Dorset), 2003. Collection of Ed Pien and Johannes Zits. Courtesy of Ed Pien. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



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Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands), 2007-8. Collection of Edward J. Guarino. Courtesy of Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Poughkeepsie. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Purple Bird Transformation), 2010. Collection of Stephanie Comer and Rob Craigie. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Self-Portrait), 2006. Collection of Barry Appleton. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Shuvinai in the Co-op Studio), 2003. Collection of Barry Appleton. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (This is My Coat of Many Colours), 2006. Collection of Edward J. Guarino. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Time Interrupted), 2006. Art Gallery of Guelph, purchased with support from the Florence G. Partridge Fund, the Elizabeth L. Gordon Art Programme of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, and the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, 2007 (MS2007.042). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Composition (Two Men and a Spider), 2007-8. Private collection. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



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Creatures, 2015. Collection of Suzanne Lamarre. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Discombobulated Woman, 1995-96. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts.



Earth and Sky, February 2008, by Shuvinai Ashoona and John Noestheden. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2009 (no. 42369). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and John Noestheden.



Earth Surrounded by Drawings, 2012. Private collection. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Earth Transformations, 2012. Collection of Martha Burns and Paul Gross. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Earths with People on Them, 2010. Collection of John and Joyce Price. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Egg, 2006. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections (CD06-33). Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.



Egg and Tools, 2004-5. Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired with funds from Mr. and Mrs. G.B. Wiswell Fund (2009-32). Photo credit: Ernest Mayer. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



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Exhibition, 2015, by Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle. Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto, and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal. Courtesy of Shary Boyle. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and Shary Boyle.



Family in Tent, 2003. Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired with funds from the Winnipeg Rh Foundation Inc. (2004-71). Photo credit: Ernest Mayer. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Handstand, 2010. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts.



Handstand, 2010, printed by Qiatsuq Niviaqsi. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections (CD10-33). Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Happy Mother, 2013. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchased with the Monique Parent Fund, 2014 (2014.91). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. Photo credit: Christine Guest.



Holding Shirts, 2015. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2016 (47003). Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Hunting Monster, 2015. Oakville Galleries, purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, the Corporation of the Town of Oakville, and the Elizabeth L. Gordon Art Program, a program of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation administered by the Ontario Arts Foundation, 2016. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



InaGodadavida, 2015, by Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2015 (no. 47002). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and Shary Boyle.



Inner Worlds, 2014. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections. Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.



Interior, 1997. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections. Courtesy of Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver. © Dorset Fine Arts.



Landscape with Grass, 1996. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2001 (no. 40566). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Low Tide, 1994. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2001 (no. 40567). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Oh My Goodness, 2011. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2013 (no. 45666). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



People Walking Between Worlds, 2010. Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, purchased with the J. Stuart Fleming Fund, 2012 (55-001). Photo credit: Bernard Clark. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Rock Landscape, 1998. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2001 (no. 40564). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Rock Landscape, 1998. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2001 (no. 40568). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Scary Dream, 2006. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections (CD06-34). Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.



Self-Portrait, 2015. Claridge Collection. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and Shary Boyle. Photo credit: Paul Litherland.



Shovelling Worlds, 2013. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with the assistance of the Joan Chalmers Inuit Art Fund, 2013 (2013/90). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Shuvinai's World – At Home, 2012. Collection of BMO Financial Group. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Sinking Titanic, 2012. Winnipeg Art Gallery, acquired with funds realized through sale of Inuit prints (2013-20). Photo credit: Ernst Mayer. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.

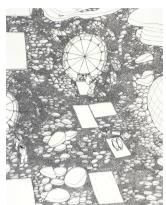


Summer Sealift, 2004. Oakville Galleries and various collections. Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts.



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Tent Surrounded by Rocks, 2006. Collection of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Three Cousins, 2005. Private collection. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Titanic, Nascopie, and Noah's Ark, 2008. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with the assistance of the Joan Chalmers Inuit Art Purchase Fund, 2009 (2009/93). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



To the Print Shop, 2013. Collection of Paul and Mary Dailey Desmarais. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Untitled, 2012. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto (148-1736). © Dorset Fine Arts.



Untitled, 2013. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto (148-1720). © Dorset Fine Arts.



Untitled (Eden), 2008. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2009, (no. 42917). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Untitled (Guitar), 2008. Collection of Kevin Hearn. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. Photo credit: Brad van der Zanden.



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Untitled (Pink Amauti Hood), February 2010. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2011 (no. 43368). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Untitled (Strange Rock Formation), 2003-4. Private collection. Courtesy of Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



Untitled Collaboration, 2008, by Shuvinai Ashoona and John Noestheden. RBC Art Collection. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and John Noestheden.



Waterfall, 1993-4. Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver. © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.

Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists



A street view of the "litho shop" at Kinngait Studios, 2005. Photograph by Nancy Campbell.

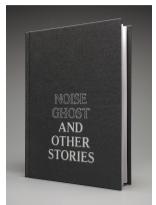


Cape Dorset Freezer, 2005, by Annie Pootoogook. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2007 (no. 42155). © Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



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Catalogue for the exhibition *Noise Ghost and Other Stories*. Art Museum at the University of Toronto. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Photo credit: Ian Lefebvre.



Interior spread of catalogue for the exhibition *Noise Ghost and Other Stories*. Art Museum at the University of Toronto. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Photo credit: Sean Weaver.



Cover of the catalogue for *Three Women, Three Generations*, 1999. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Photo credit: Ian Lefebvre.



Installation of *Earth and Sky*, 2012, at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, April 26-September 2, 2013. Photograph by Janice Pine. Courtesy of Janice Pine and John Noestheden.



Installation view of *Universal Cobra*, 2015. Photograph by Paul Litherland. Courtesy of Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.



Installation view of *Universal Cobra*, 2015, with *InaGodadavida* on the right. Photograph by Paul Litherland. Courtesy of Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.



Installation view of *Woven Thoughts*, September 2014. Photograph by Renzo Fernandez. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto.



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Kijjautiik (Scissors), 2007, by Annie Pootoogook. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto, and various collections (2007-01). Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts.



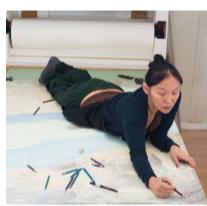
Pitseolak Ashoona drawing in her summer tent in Cape Dorset, June 1967. Photograph by Evelyn Crees.



Scotch Bonnet, 2007, by Shary Boyle. Private collection. Courtesy of Shary Boyle. © Shary Boyle.



Shuvinai Ashoona drawing a landscape work, 2006. Photograph by Nancy Campbell.



Shuvinai Ashoona drawing at Kinngait Studios, November 6, 2014. Photograph by William Ritchie.



Shuvinai Ashoona drawing in Kinngait Studios, January 29, 2013. Photograph by William Ritchie.



Still from the film *Ghost Noise*, 2010, directed by Marcia Connolly. Courtesy of Marcia Connolly.



Terrence Ryan with Pitseolak Ashoona and Anirnik Peesee, date and photographer unknown. Courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto.



The community of Cape Dorset, 2006. Photograph by Nancy Campbell.



Untitled, 2006, by Annie Pootoogook. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto (CPT 4236). © Dorset Fine Arts.



Untitled, 2015, by Pudlo Samajualie. Dorset Fine Arts, Toronto. © Dorset Fine Arts.

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